

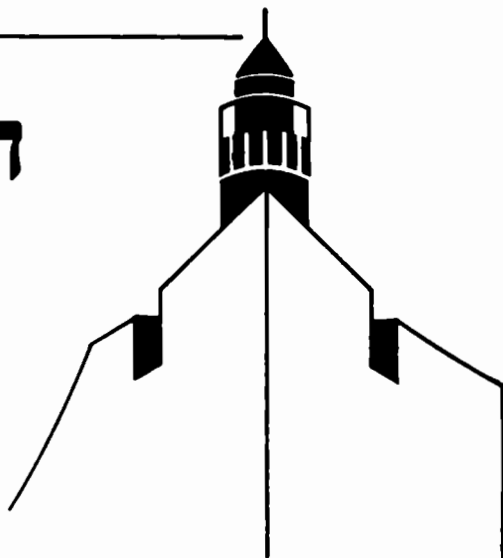
חמש
מגילות

The
Metsudah
Five Megillos



חמש מגילות

**The
Metsudah
Five Megillos**



רות Ruth
שיר השירים Shir Hashirim
קהלת Koheles
איכה Eichah
אסתר Esther

Translated and Annotated
by Rabbi Avrohom Davis

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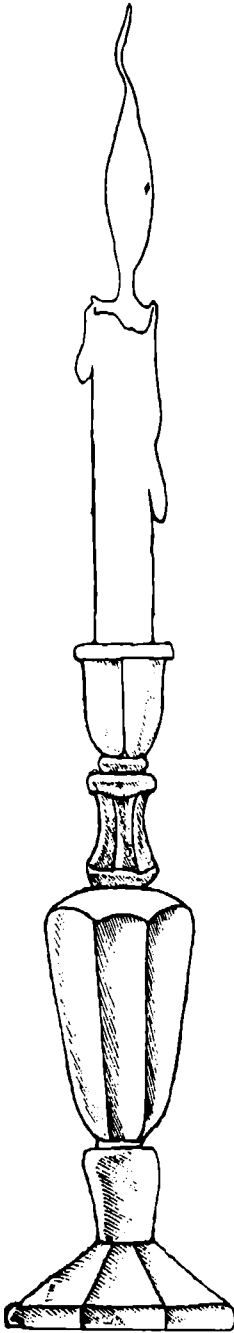
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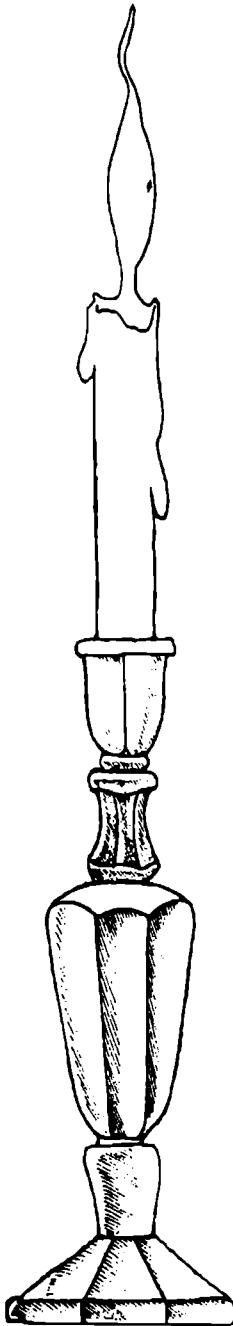
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In memory of
our loving grandparents
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תנצב"ה

Zev & Ruth Fromm
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Preface to Ruth

The Book of Ruth is read on Shavuot. Several reasons have been suggested for this. *Avudraham*, the famous fourteenth-century Spanish authority on the liturgy, is the source of two basic reasons, namely, that the barley harvest which is the background to the story makes it appropriate for the harvest festival of Shavuot, and also that Ruth's conversion to Judaism is an appropriate parallel to the Festival which itself celebrates Israel's acceptance of the Torah through a process of ritual conversion.

The *Midrash* [Yalkut Shimoni] observes that the trials and tribulations of Naomi and Ruth leading up to Ruth's conversion and acceptance of her lot within the Jewish community illustrates the thought 'that the Torah is not won without suffering and poverty.' Rav Zeira remarked (*Midrash Rabbah*, Ruth 2:15) that the book contains no laws of the pure or impure, no forbidden or permitted matter. Why was it then written? To teach us how great is the reward of those who bestow kindness on others. For we see that the foundation of Jewish monarchy with the birth of King David was the direct outgrowth of **חֶסֶד** kindness, which was the prominent characteristic of both Ruth and Boaz, the ancestors of David. Thus there is a similarity between Megillas Ruth and the Torah which is replete with laws based on lovingkindness. Always intent on the minutest point of interest, the Rabbis have observed that the numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word **רחם** is 606 which, with the seven Noachide laws, add up to 613, the sum total of the mitzvos in the Torah.

In addition to the above, there are those who show the connection of this book to Shavuot through the relationship of Ruth, the ancestress of King David. For tradition has it that King David was born and died on Shavuot.

It is clear that the wealth of reasons submitted to justify the reading of the Book of Ruth on Shavuot are all valid and serve as a loving tribute to the inspiring story it tells.

Ruth רות

Chapter I פרק א

1. And it happened **א. ויהי**
 in the days when the Judges judged,¹ **בְּיָמֵי שְׁפָט הַשְּׁפֹטִים**
 that there was a famine in the land, **וַיְהִי רָעָב בְּאֶרֶץ**
 and a man² of Bethlehem in Judah went **וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה**
 to sojourn³ in the fields of Moab⁴; **לְגוֹר בְּשָׂדֵי מוֹאָב**
 he with his wife and two sons. **הוא ואשתו ושני בָּנָיו:**
2. The man's name was Elimelech, **ב. וְשֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֱלִימֶלֶךְ**
 his wife's name was Naomi,⁵ **וְשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ נָעֳמִי**
 the name[s] of his two sons, **וְשֵׁם שְׁנֵי-בָנָיו |**
 were Machlon and Kilyon, **מַחֲלֹן וְכִלְיוֹן**
 Ephrathites⁶ from Bethlehem in Judah; **אֶפְרַתִּים מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה**
 they came to the Moabite country **וַיָּבֹאוּ שְׂדֵי-מוֹאָב**
 and remained there.⁷ **וַיֵּהְיוּ-שָׁם:**
3. Elimelech, Naomi's husband died,⁸ **ג. וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נָעֳמִי**
 and she was left with her two sons. **וַתֵּשָׂאֲרָה הִיא וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ:**

¹ There are various views in the Midrash regarding the exact date of this narrative. The Talmud (Mesechet Bava Bathra 91a) states in the name of Rav that the story of Ruth occurred before the reign of King Saul, when the Jews were ruled by Judges, and specifically at the time of Ivtzan, the successor to Yiftach (see Judges 12:8). The Sages identify Ivtzan as Boaz, a central figure in Megillas Ruth.

² The word **אִישׁ** denotes an important person, as the *Targum* translates, "Gavra Rabbah" a great man. Elimelech was certainly of importance as a man of great wealth.

³ The reasons for his leaving were his meanness and selfishness. He was afraid that the hungry people would come to him for help—*Rashi*. Nevertheless there is one redeeming feature, because he set out merely to *sojourn* temporarily until the famine was over, and not with the intention of settling there permanently.

⁴ Elimelech's sin was compounded by his going to Moab. Had he gone to another land, his sin would not have been so great, for Moab was detested by God, as Scripture relates, "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter into the congregation of Adonoy—forever" (Deuteronomy 23:4). It says also, "You shall not seek their peace or their well-being all your days forever" (Deuteronomy 23:7).—*Iggeres Shmuel*

⁵ *Naomi* means pleasant or sweet. Her name typified her deeds, which were pleasant.

⁶ They came from Ephrath, which was the original name for Bethlehem (see Genesis 35:19, 48:7). According to the *Targum* the word **אֶפְרַתִּים** is translated as *masters*, (**רַבִּינִין**).

⁷ Although they had intended to sojourn there temporarily (see note 3), they decided to remain in permanent residence.—*Malbim*

⁸ Not from old age or sickness, but as the result of Divine punishment for leaving the Holy Land and remaining in Moab.

4. They married Maobite women,⁹ וַיִּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מֵאֲבוֹיֹת
one of whom was named Orpah, שֶׁם הָאֶחָת עֹרְפָּה
and the name of the second Ruth,¹⁰ וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רֹוּת
and they lived there about ten years.¹¹ וַיָּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים:
5. They both died; ה. וַיָּמָתוּ גַם-שְׁנֵיהֶם
Machlon and Kilyon, מַחֲלֹן וְכִלְיוֹן
the woman was bereft of her two sons וַתֵּשָׂאֵר הָאִשָּׁה מִשְׁנֵי יְלָדֶיהָ
and of her husband. וּמֵאִישָׁהּ:
6. She then arose with her daughters-in-law,¹² ו. וַתָּקָם הִיא וְכַלְתֶּיהָ
in order to return from the fields of Moab וַתָּשָׁב מִשְׂדֵּי מוֹאָב
for she had heard in the fields of Moab כִּי שָׁמְעָה בְּשָׂדֵה מוֹאָב
that Adonoy had cared for His people¹³ כִּי-יִפְקֹד יְהוָה אֶת-עַמּוֹ
to give them food. לָתֵת לָהֶם לֶחֶם:
7. She left the place ז. וַתֵּצֵא מִן-הַמָּקוֹם
where she had been, אֶשֶׁר הָיְתָה-שָׁמָּה
accompanied by her two daughters-in-law, וּשְׁתֵּי כַלְתֶּיהָ עִמָּה
and they took the road וַתֵּלְכֶנָּה בְּדֶרֶךְ
to return to the land of Judah. לָשׁוּב אֶל-אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה:
8. Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, ח. וַתֹּאמֶר נָעֲמִי לְשְׁתֵּי כַלְתֶּיהָ
"Go, return, לֵכְנָה שְׁכֵנָה
each of you to her mother's home; אִשָּׁה לְבֵית אִמָּה
may Adonoy deal kindly with you יַעֲשֵׂ יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם חֲסֵד
as you have dealt with the dead¹⁴ כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם עִם-הַמֵּתִים
and with me.¹⁵ וְעִמָּדִי:

⁹ The sons sinned even more grievously in taking Moabite wives. It should be noted that only after their father's death did the sons marry women who were not of their faith. Most probably, Elimelech would not have tolerated such action.—*Alshich*

¹⁰ According to tradition, Ruth and Orpah were the daughters of Eglon, King of Moab (see Mesechet Sanhedrin 105b).

¹¹ This confirms the view that they had given up all thought of returning to the land of Israel.—*Malbim*

¹² The resolve to leave their ill-fated domicile was equally shared by them all, because in their minds their evil fortune was bound up with their present luckless abode.—*Malbim*

¹³ She heard this from the Jewish travellers and peddlers who had brought merchandise to sell in Moab.—*Midrash*

¹⁴ By concerning yourselves with their burial (shrouds etc.) and by not remarriage.—*Midrash-Targum*

¹⁵ By renouncing the marriage settlement which you could have legally claimed and by caring for my basic necessities.—*Midrash-Targum*

9. May Adonoy grant you
that you may find [security] rest
each in the home of her [new] husband";
she kissed them
and they wept aloud.
10. And they said to her,
"We will return with you to your people."¹⁶
11. And Naomi said,
"Turn back my daughters,
why should you come with me?
Am I likely to have more sons in my womb,
that they may be your husbands?
12. "Turn back, my daughters, go [your way],
for I am too old to have a husband.
Even if I could say: 'I have yet hope,'
even if I were to have a husband tonight—
and even if I were to bear sons—
13. Would you wait for them
until they were grown to manhood?
Would you shut yourselves in for them,
denying yourselves to marry another?—
No, my daughters,
my distress is great on your account,¹⁷
for against me is directed
the hand of Adonoy."
14. They wept loudly again,
Orpah kissed her mother-in-law,¹⁸
- ט. יתן יהוה לכם
ומצאנו מנוחה
אשה בית אישה
ותשק להן
ותשאנה קולן ותבכינה:
י. ותאמרנה לה
כי-אתך נשוב לעמך:
יא. ותאמר נעמי
שכנה בנתי
למה תלכנה עמי
העוד-לי בנים במעי
והיו לכם לאנשים:
יב. שכנה בנתי לכן.
כי וקנתי מהיות לאיש
כי אמרתי יש-לי תקנה
גם היתתי הלילה לאיש
וגם ילדתי בנים:
יג. הלהן | תשפרכנה
עד אשר יגדלו
הלהן תעגנה
לבתי היות לאיש
אל בנתי
כי-מר-לי מאד מכם
כי-יצאה בי
יד-יהוה:
יד. ותשאנה קולן ותבכינה עוד
ותשק ערפה לחמותה

¹⁶ From this declaration, Naomi understood that their desire was only to settle among the Jews but not to accept their religion by converting.—*Malbim*

According to *Alshich*, however, she understood them to convey a strong desire to convert, and accept the God of Israel.

¹⁷ Because when I see your bereavement, I am reminded that my sons died a tragic death because of you.

¹⁸ Scripture reveals no more of their parting—no words of farewell—only the kiss. Orpah was one of the tragic figures who needed but a little more resolution at the critical moment, and for lack of it, shut themselves out from the covenant and sank back to a world of idolatry and immorality.

but Ruth did cling to her. 15. And she [Naomi] said to her, “See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her god;¹⁹ return along with your sister-in-law.” 16. But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to desert you, to turn away from you. For wherever you go, I shall go, where you lodge, I will lodge, your people are my people, and your God, is my God. 17. Where you die, I will die and there I shall be buried; so may Adonoy do to me—and even more— if anything but death separate me from you.” 18. [And when] she saw that she was determined to go with her, she refrained from further discussion with her. 19. So the two of them went on²⁰ until they came to Bethlehem; and on their arrival in Bethlehem the whole city was astir on their account,²¹ and the women remarked, “Is this [really] Naomi.”²² 20. She said to them,

וְרוּת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ:
טו. וְתֹאמַר
הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבִמְתִּי
אֶל-עַמָּהּ וְאֶל-אֱלֹהֶיהָ
שׁוֹבִי אַחֲרַי יְבִמְתִּי:
טז. וְתֹאמַר רות
אֶל-תִּפְגְּעִי-בִי לְעֻזְבֶּךָ
לְשׁוֹב מֵאַחֲרַיִךְ
כִּי אֶל-אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלָיו
וּבְאֲשֶׁר תֵּלִינִי אֵלָיו
עַמִּי עַמִּי
וְאֱלֹהֶיךָ אֱלֹהֵי:
יז. בְּאֲשֶׁר תָּמוּתִי אֲמוֹת
וְשָׁם אֶקְבֹּר
כֹּה יַעֲשֶׂה יְהוָה לִי וְכֹה יוֹסִיף
כִּי הַמּוֹת יִפְרִיד בֵּינִי וּבֵינָהּ:
יח. וְהִנֵּה
כִּי-מִתְאַמְּצָת הִיא לָלֶכֶת אַתָּה
וּתְחַדֵּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ:
יט. וַתֵּלַכְנָה שְׁתֵּיהֶם
עַד-בִּזְאוּנָה בֵּית לָחֶם
וַיְהִי כְּבוֹאוֹנָהּ בֵּית לָחֶם
וַתִּהְיֶה כָּל-הָעִיר עָלֶיהֶן
וְתֹאמְרָנָה
הֲזֹאת גֵּעֲמִי:
כ. וְתֹאמַר אֵלֶיהֶן

¹⁹ This would seem to indicate that she had renounced her previous intention to convert.

²⁰ Ruth's determination was so strong that she is ranked equally with Naomi, and despite leaving her home and family, she went with the same strength of soul and purpose as Naomi.—*Rashi*

²¹ Although the text makes it clear that the commotion was due to the arrival of Naomi, the Aggadah says that the wife of Boaz was being buried that very day and the city had gathered to attend her funeral.

²² The shock and surprise was elicited by the tragic reversal of fortune that struck the eye with such force. Here was an old woman, weary and worn, with every mark of sorrow and suffering. Could this be the wealthy lady of past glory they had known a decade ago.—*Midrash*

“Do not call me Naomi [sweet or pleasant]
but call me Mara [embittered one],
for most bitterly has God dealt with me.
21. I had gone forth full²³
but Adonoy has brought me back, empty²⁴;
why call me Naomi,
when Adonoy has testified against me²⁵
and the Almighty [has brought]
catastrophe upon me?”
22. Thus did Naomi return,
and Ruth, the Moabitess,
her daughter-in-law, with her,
they who had returned—
from the fields of Moab
and they arrived in Bethlehem
at the start of the barley harvest.

אֶל־תִּקְרְאֵנִי לִי נְעֻמִּי
קְרְאֵנִי לִי מָרָא
כִּי־הָמָר שָׂדֵי לִי מָאָד:
כֹּא. אֲנִי מְלֵאָה הִלְכָּתִי
וְרִיקָם הֵשִׁיבֵנִי יְהוָה
לָמָּה תִּקְרְאֵנִי לִי נְעֻמִּי
יְהוָה עָנָה לִּי
וְשָׂדֵי
הָרַע־לִי:
כֹּב. וַתָּשָׁב נְעֻמִּי
וְרוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה
כְּלָתָהּ עִמָּה
הַשָּׁבָה
מִשְׂדֵּי מוֹאָב
וְהָמָּה בָּאוּ בֵּית לָחֶם
בְּתַחֲלֹת קֹצִיר שְׂעִירִים:

Chapter II פרק ב

1. And unto Naomi there was
a kinsman on her husband's side,
a man of power and substance,
of the family of Elimelech,
and his name was Boaz.²⁶
2. Ruth, the Moabitess, said
to Naomi,
“Let me go now to the field
and glean among the stalks, behind one

א. וְלִנְעֻמִּי
מֹדֵר לְאִשָּׁה
אִישׁ גִּבּוֹר חָיִל
מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ
וְשֵׁמוֹ בֹּעַז:
ב. וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה
אֶל־נְעֻמִּי
אֵלֶכָּה־נָּא הַשָּׂדֶה
וְאֶלְקָטָה בְּשִׂבְלִים אַחֵר

²³ With an abundance of wealth, blessed with a husband and family.

²⁴ Widowed and childless, lonely and poor.

²⁵ The Almighty has testified that I have sinned.—*Rashi*

²⁶ The Talmud suggests that Elimelech, Salmon, (the father of Boaz), Peloni-Almoni, (the anonymous relative mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4) and Naomi's father were all sons of Nachshon ben Aminadav. Thus Boaz was a cousin to Naomi (see *Mesechet Bava Bathra* 91a).

in whose eyes I will find favor”;	אֲשֶׁר אֶמְצָא־חַן בְּעֵינָיו
and she said, “Go, my daughter.”	וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ לְכִי בָתִּי:
3. So she went, and came	ג. וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא
and gleaned in the field,	וַתִּלְקֹט בַּשָּׂדֶה
behind the harvesters;	אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים
[and as Divine fate decreed] she happened	וַיִּקַּר מִקְרָהָ
upon that parcel of land	חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה
belonging to Boaz,	לְבִעֹז
who was of the family of Elimelech.	אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ:
4. Behold Boaz arrived from Bethlehem ²⁷	ד. וַהֲגֵה־בִעֹז בָּא מִבֵּית לָחֶם
and he said to the harvesters,	וַיֹּאמֶר לַקֹּצְרִים
“Adonoy be with you.”	יְהוָה עִמָּכֶם
and they responded, “Adonoy bless you.”	וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרְכֶךָ יְהוָה:
5. Boaz said to his attendant,	ה. וַיֹּאמֶר בִּעֹז לְנַעֲרֹו
who was in charge of the harvesters,	הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקֹּצְרִים
“to whom does this maiden belong?” ²⁸	לְמִי הַנַּעֲרָה הַזֹּאת:
6. And the attendant answered—	ו. וַיַּעַן הַנַּעֲר
he who was in charge of the harvesters—	הַנֹּצֵב עַל־הַקֹּצְרִים
and he said,	וַיֹּאמֶר
“She is a Moabite girl,	נַעֲרָה מוֹאבִּיָּה הִיא
who returned with Naomi	הַשֹּׁבָה עִם־נָעֲמִי
from the fields of Moab.”	מִשְׁדֵּי מוֹאֵב:
7. And she did say,	ז. וַתֹּאמֶר
“Please allow me to glean	אֶלְקֹטָה־נָּא
and gather among the sheaves,	וְאֶסְפְּתִי בְּעִמְרִים
behind the harvesters”;	אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים
so she came and has remained	וַתָּבוֹא וַתַּעֲמֹד
from early morning until now	מֵאֹז הַבֹּקֶר וְעַד־עַתָּה

²⁷ He returned to his fields following the mourning period for his wife (see Chapter 1:19 and notes thereto).

²⁸ The interest of Boaz was aroused by her intelligent and modest behavior. She would only pick up the ears of grain when two of them fell from the reapers' hands but not if three fell, as the Halacha prescribes.—*Mishna Peah* 6:5. Moreover, She never stooped over immodestly to take the gleanings, but would gather them either standing or squatting.—*Midrash*

staying at home only a short time."

8. Then Boaz said to Ruth,

"Listen well, my daughter,

do not go to glean in another field,

and do not go away from here,²⁹

but keep close to my maidens.³⁰

9. Keep your eyes on the field

where they are harvesting, and follow them.

I have ordered the lads

not to disturb you;

and when you are thirsty, go to the jugs

and drink from [the water]

which the lads have drawn."

10. She then fell on her face,

prostrating herself on the ground,

and said to him,

"Why have I found favor in your eyes,

that you should take notice of me,

though I am a foreigner?"

11. Boaz answered³¹ and said to her,

"It has been fully reported to me

all that you have done for your mother-in-law

since your husband's death,

how you left your father and mother

and the land of your birth,

and went to a people

you had never known before.

12. May Adonoy reward your deed,

may you be given full recompense

וְהָ שְׂכָתָהּ הַבַּיִת מְעוֹט:

ח. וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעוֹז אֶל-רוּת

הֲלֹא שָׁמַעְתָּ בְּתִי

אֶל-תִּלְכִּי לְלֶקֶט בְּשָׂדֶה אֲחֵר

וְגַם לֹא תִעָבְרִי מִזֶּה

וְכֵה תִדְבָּקִין עִם-גִּזְעָרְתִּי:

ט. עֵינֶיךָ בְּשָׂדֶה

אֲשֶׁר-יִקְצְרוּן וְהִלַּכְתְּ אַחֲרֵיהֶן

הֲלֹא צִוִּיתִי אֶת-הַנְּעָרִים

לְבִלְתִּי נִגְעָה

וְצִמְתְּ וְהִלַּכְתְּ אֶל-הַפְּלִים

וְשָׁתִית

מֵאֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאָבוּן הַנְּעָרִים:

י. וַתִּפֹּל עַל-פָּנֶיהָ

וַתִּשְׁתַּחוּ אֶרְצָהּ

וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו

מִדּוּלַּע מָצָאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ

לְהַפְדִּירֵנִי

וְאַנְכִי נִכְרִיָּה:

יא. וַיַּעַן בָּעוֹז וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ

הַגֵּד הַגֵּד לִי

כָּל אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתְּ אֶת-חֲמוֹתְךָ

אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אִישֶׁךָ

וַתַּעֲזָבִי אֶבְרִיךָ וְאִמֶּךָ

וְאֶרֶץ מוֹלֶדְתְּךָ

וַתִּלְכִּי אֶל-עַם

אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יָדַעְתָּ תְּמוֹל שְׁלֹשׁוֹם:

יב. יִשְׁלַם יְהוָה פְּעֻלָּתְךָ

וַתְּהִי מִשְׁפָּרְתְּךָ שְׂלֵמָה

²⁹ Here Boaz indicates that she shouldn't even glean in one of *his* other fields.—*Malbim*

³⁰ These were maidens who followed behind the harvesters and bound the sheaves.

³¹ The word *וַיַּעַן*, usually indicates raising the voice. Boaz spoke for all to hear. He wanted everyone to know of Ruth's noble deeds and dedication to Naomi.

- from Adonoy, God of Israel,
for you have come to seek refuge
under His wings [protection].”
13. Then she said,
“I have found favor in your eyes, my lord,
for you have comforted me,
and have spoken
to the heart of your handmaid,
though I cannot even be considered
as one of your handmaidens.”
14. And Boaz said to her at mealtime,
“Come here and partake of the meal,³²
and dip your bread in the vinegar.”³³
But she sat besides the harvesters,³⁴
and he handed her some roasted grain;
she ate and was satisfied,
and left some over.
15. And when she arose to glean,
Boaz ordered his lads, saying,
“Let her glean even among the sheaves,³⁵
and do not humiliate her.”³⁶
16. And also let [some sheaves] fall for her³⁷
even from the bundles,
and leave them for her to glean,
and do not rebuke her.
17. So she gleaned in the field 'till evening

מֵעַם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל
אֲשֶׁר-בָּאת לְחַסוֹת
תַּחַת-כְּנָפָיו:
יג. וְהָאֵמֶר
אֶמְצָא-חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנָי
כִּי נִחַמְתָּנִי
וְכִי דִבַּרְתָּ
עַל-לֵב שִׁפְחָתְךָ
וְאֵנֹכִי לֹא אֶהְיֶה
כְּאַחַת שִׁפְחֹתֶיךָ:
יד. וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בָּעֵת הָאֵלֶּכְל
גֹּשִׁי הַלֶּם וְאִכְלָתְ מִן-הַלֶּחֶם
וְטָבַלְתְּ פָתְךָ בַּחֲמִץ
וְהָשֵׁב מִצֵּד הַקָּצִירִים
וַיַּצְבֵּט-לָהּ קָלִי
וְהָאֵכֵל וְהִשְׂבַּע
וְהִתְּרָ:
טו. וַתָּקֶם לִלְקֹט
וַיֵּצֵא בָּעֵז אֶת-נַעֲרָיו לֵאמֹר
גַּם בֵּין הָעֲמָרִים תִּלְקֹט
וְלֹא תְכַלְמֶיהָ:
טז. וְגַם שֶׁל־תִּשְׁלֹו לָהּ
מִן-הַצִּבּוֹתִים
וְעֹזְבוֹתֵם וְלִקְטָהּ
וְלֹא תִגְעְרוּ-בָהּ:
יז. וְהִלְקֹט בַּשָּׂדֶה עַד-הָעֶרֶב

³² She had modestly taken a seat at the foot of the table and he invited her to sit with him at the head of the table.—*Malbin*

³³ Vinegar or sour wine in hot weather is particularly beneficial to allay thirst, and to cool the body. It is a popular, refreshing beverage for those who toil in extremely hot climates.

³⁴ She modestly declined the honor of sitting at the head of the table.—*Alshich*

³⁵ Boaz instructed them to let her glean even among the sheaves which the poor are not legally entitled to.

³⁶ By telling her that she is not entitled to glean from the sheaves.

³⁷ Let them fall *for her*, in a manner that will permit her to gather them before anyone else.

and she milled that which she gleaned,
and produced about an ephah of barley.³⁸

18. She carried it and went into the city.

Her mother-in-law saw
what she had gleaned,

and she took it out [to show her]

and she gave her what she had left over
after eating her fill.³⁹

19. Her mother-in-law said to her,

“Where did you glean today,
and where did you work?

Blessed be he that took note of you.”

So she told her mother-in-law
about whom she had been working with,
and she said,

“The name of the man
with whom I worked today, is Boaz.”

20. And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law,

“Blessed be he of Adonoy,

Who has not abandoned His kindness
with the living and with the dead.”

And Naomi said to her,

“The man is related to us,
he is one of our [near] kinsmen.”⁴⁰

21. And Ruth the Moabite said,⁴¹

“What is more, he said to me:

וַתִּחַבֵּט אֶת אֲשֶׁר-לָקְטָה
וַיְהִי כֵאִיפָה שְׁעָרִים:

יח. וַתִּשָּׂא וַתָּבוֹא הָעִיר

וַתֵּרָא חֲמוּתָהּ

אֶת אֲשֶׁר-לָקְטָה

וַתוֹצֵא

וַתִּתֵּן-לָהּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר-הוּתְרָהּ

מִשְׂבֻּעָהּ:

יט. וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ חֲמוּתָהּ

אֵיפֹה לָקַטְתָּ הַיּוֹם

וְאַנְהָ עָשִׂית

יְהִי מִכִּינֹךְ בְּרוּךְ

וַתַּגֵּד לַחֲמוּתָהּ

אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשְׂתָה עִמּוֹ

וַתֹּאמֶר

שֵׁם הָאִישׁ

אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בְּעֵז:

כ. וַתֹּאמֶר נַעֲמִי לְכַלְתָּהּ

בְּרוּךְ הוּא לַיהוָה

אֲשֶׁר לֹא-עָזַב חֲסִדּוֹ

אֶת-הַחַיִּים וְאֶת-הַמֵּתִים

וַתֹּאמֶר לָהּ נַעֲמִי

קָרוֹב לָנוּ הָאִישׁ

מִגְאֻלָּנוּ הוּא:

כא. וַתֹּאמֶר רֹת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה

גַּם | כִּי-אָמַר אֵלַי

³⁸ An *ephah* equals ten *omers*. One *omer* is sufficient for a day's food for a person. See *Exodus 16:16* regarding the *Mannah* which provided an *omer* for each person. An *ephah* was thus a very substantial amount.

³⁹ From the meal given her by Boaz.

⁴⁰ The literal translation of *גואל*, is, one of our redeemers. A *גואל* had both rights and duties. He had the right of buying or redeeming the property which his impoverished kin was forced to sell. It was also his duty to redeem his relative who sold himself as a slave because of poverty.

⁴¹ She is referred to here as a Moabite to indicate that she had not strictly followed Boaz' advice. He told her to stay close to his maidens, while she said "to my lads."—*Midrash*

- ‘Stay close to my lads
until they have finished
all my harvesting.’”
22. Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, Ruth,
“It is best for you, my daughter,
that you go forth with his maidens,
so that they will not encounter you
in a different field.”⁴²
23. So she kept close to the maidens of Boaz,
to glean [with them]
until the end of the barley harvest
and of the wheat harvest,
and she [continued] to live
with her mother-in-law.
- עם-הנערים אשר-לי תדבקין
עד אם-כלו
את כל-הקציר אשר-לי:
כב. ותאמר נעמי אל-רות בלתי
טוב בלי
כי תצאי עם-נערותיו
ולא יפגועו-בך
בשדה אחר:
כג. ותדבק בנערות בעו
ללקט
עד-כלות קציר-השעורים
וקציר החטים
ותשב
את-חמותה:

Chapter III פרק ג

1. Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her,⁴³
“My daughter, I shall seek security for you,⁴⁴
which will be good for you.⁴⁵
2. Now, Boaz, our kinsman,
with whose maidens you have been,
behold, he will be winnowing the barley
on the threshing floor, tonight.
3. Bathe and scent yourself,
dress yourself in your finest garb,
- א. ותאמר לה נעמי חמותה
בלי הלא אבקש-לך מנוח
אשר ייטב-לך:
ב. ועתה הלא בעו מדעתנו
אשר היית את-נערותיו
הנה-הוא ונה
את-גון השעורים הלילה:
ג. ורחצת | וסכת
ושמת שמלתך עליך

⁴² It would be considered a discourtesy if they would meet you in another's field after taking their favors and hospitality.

⁴³ Now that the harvest was over and Boaz had not yet indicated a desire to marry Ruth, Naomi decided to bring matters to a head. She was moved by her desire that Ruth find a home befitting her worth and character.

⁴⁴ A woman has no security until she marries. As Ruth had no mother to guide her, Naomi considered it to be her obligation.

⁴⁵ Not so much in the material as in the spiritual sense. Only a righteous, God-fearing husband, with a genuine understanding of human nature, and the quality of kindness and generosity, is able to bring spiritual happiness to his wife. These qualities were abundant in Boaz.

and go down to the threshing floor,
but do not identify yourself to the man
until he has finished eating and drinking.

4. And when he lies down,

take note of the place

where he lies,

and go in, uncover his feet,⁴⁶

and lie down;

He will tell you⁴⁷

what you are to do.”

5. She answered her,

“All that you say to me, I will do.”

6. So she went down to the threshing-floor,⁴⁸

and did exactly

as her mother-in-law had bidden her.

7. When Boaz ate and drank

and his heart was jubilant,

he went to lie down

at the far end of the grain heap;

and she came in softly,

uncovered his feet,

and lay down.

8. And it was at midnight,

that the man was startled and turned about—

and behold—

there was a woman lying at his feet.⁴⁹

וַיֵּרָדָהּ הַגֶּרֶן
אֶל-תֹּהֲדָעִי לְאִישׁ
עַד בִּלְתּוֹ לֶאֱכֹל וּלְשָׁתוֹת:

ד. וַיְהִי בְשָׁכְבוֹ
וַיִּדְעָה אֶת-הַמָּקוֹם
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב-שָׁם
וַבָּאָת וּגְלִית מְרֹגְלָתּוֹ
וְשָׁכְבָהּ
וְהוּא יִגִּיד לָהּ

אֵת אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֶׂינָּה:
ה. וַתֹּאמֶר אֵלֶיהָ
כָּל אֲשֶׁר-תֹּאמַרְי אֲלִי אַעֲשֶׂה:

ו. וַתֵּרֶד הַגֶּרֶן
וַתַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל
אֲשֶׁר-צִוְתָהּ חֲמוּלָהּ:
ז. וַיֹּאכַל בָּצוּ וַיִּשְׁתְּ
וַיִּיטֵב לָבוֹ

וַיָּבֹא לִשְׁכַּב
בְּקֶצֶה הָעֲרֹמָה
וַתֵּבֵא בִלָּט
וַתְּגַל מְרֹגְלָתּוֹ

וַתִּשְׁכַּב:
ח. וַיְהִי בַחֲצֵי הַלַּיְלָה
וַיִּתְרַד הָאִישׁ וַיִּלָּפֶת
וְהִנֵּה

אִשָּׁה שֹׁכֶכֶת מְרֹגְלָתּוֹ:

⁴⁶ When a brother refuses to be **קֵינָם**, to enter into a levirate marriage with his childless brother's widow, he must perform **חליצה**, a ceremony which involves the removal of his shoe (Deuteronomy 25:5=10). Naomi suggested that Ruth remove his shoes to remind Boaz of his moral obligation to marry her, as the nearest of kin.—*Malbim*

⁴⁷ This word **הוא** in this phrase, has been translated *He* because it refers to God. Naomi tells Ruth that God will prompt her to speak and act properly.

⁴⁸ Only after reaching the threshing floor did she do as Naomi had told her. This saved her from the curious glances which a festively attired and perfumed woman would attract. When she reached the threshing floor, she followed Naomi's bidding and dressed herself in her best finery and scented herself with perfume.—*Rashi, Malbim*

⁴⁹ According to *Ibn Ezra*, he recognized her as a woman by her voice as she may have whispered, "Don't be afraid." He may also have distinguished her face or clothing in the light of the moon.

9. And he said, "Who are you?" **ט. וַיֹּאמֶר מִי־אַתָּה**
 And she answered, **וַתֹּאמֶר**
 "I am Ruth, your handmaid;
 spread your mantle over your handmaid,⁵⁰
 for you are a near kinsman."⁵¹ **אֲנֹכִי רוּת אֲמָתְךָ
 וּפָרַשְׁתָּ כְּנָפֶךָ עַל־אֲמָתְךָ
 כִּי גֹאֵל אָתָּה:**
10. He then said, **י. וַיֹּאמֶר**
 "Blessed be you of Adonoy, my daughter,
 your latest act of kindness has excelled
 your earlier kindness,⁵²
 since you did not go [seek]
 after the young[er] men,
 whether poor or rich. **בְּרוּכָה אַתָּה לַיהוָה בְּתִי
 הַיִּטְבַּחַת חֲסִידְךָ הָאֲחֵרֹן
 מִן־הָרֵאשֹׁן
 לְכַלְתִּי־לָכֶת
 אַחֲרֵי הַבָּחוּרִים
 אִם־דָּל וְאִם־עָשִׁיר:**
11. And now, my daughter, fear not;
 whatever you ask, I will do for you,
 for it is known **יא. וְעַתָּה בְּתִי אֶל־תִּירָאִי
 כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־תֹּאמַרְי אֶעֱשֶׂה־לָּךְ
 כִּי יוֹדָע**
 to all [who sit] in the gate⁵³ of my people,
 that you are a virtuous woman. **כָּל־שֹׁעֵר עָמִי
 כִּי אִשָּׁת חַיִּל אַתָּה:**
12. Now, though it is true
 that I am a near kinsman,
 yet there is a kinsman
 who is even closer than I.⁵⁴ **יב. וְעַתָּה כִּי אָמַנְם
 כִּי גֹאֵל אֲנִכִּי
 וְגַם יֵשׁ גֹּאֵל
 קָרוֹב מִמֶּנִּי:**
13. Stay the night;
 and in the morning—
 if he will redeem you— **יג. לַיְלָה | הִלְיָלָה
 וְהָיָה בִּבְקָר
 אִם־יִגְאָלְךָ**

⁵⁰ Spread your mantle over me as a token of marriage, and then take me as your wife with a proper wedding ceremony. [chupah].—*Rashi* and others

⁵¹ It was, therefore, his legal right and duty to redeem her husband's estate (Leviticus 25:25). She then proceeds to ask him to acquire her, too, so that the name of the departed might be perpetuated with his property.—*Rashi*

⁵² When you abandoned your home and fortune to attach yourself to your mother-in-law. Your willingness now to marry an older man in order to perpetuate the name of your late husband is a great sacrifice on your part.—*Alshich, Ralbag*

⁵³ The gate in Biblical times, was the gathering point for those who assembled in the city. Boaz sought to reassure Ruth that the elders would not try to dissuade him from marrying a Moabite woman. They know you to be a woman of virtue.—*Malbim*

⁵⁴ He was a brother of Elimelech, whereas Boaz was only a nephew.—*Rashi*

well and good, let him redeem you, טוב יגאל
 but if he does not wish to redeem you, ואם-לא יחפץ לגאולך
 then I will redeem you, ונגאלתיך אנכי
 as Adonoy lives⁵⁵— חי-יהוה
 lie here until the morning.” שכבי עד-הבקר:
 14. So she lay at his feet till the morning, יד. ותשכב מרגליו עד-הבקר
 and she arose ותקם
 before one could recognize another, בטרום יכיר איש את-רעהו
 for he said, ויאמר
 “It must not be known אל-יודע
 that the woman came to the threshing floor.”⁵⁶ כי-באה האשה הגרן:
 15. And he said, טו. ויאמר
 “Bring [me] the shawl you are wearing, הָכִי המטפחת אשר-עליך
 and hold it out.” ואחזי-בה
 She held it, and he measured out ותאחו בה וימד
 six measures of barley, שש-שעורים
 and he placed it upon her; וישת עליה
 he then went into the city.⁵⁷ ויבא העיר:
 16. She came to her mother-in-law, who said, טו. ותבוא אל-חמומה ותאמר
 “What happened with you, my daughter?”⁵⁸ מי-את בתי
 So she told her ותגד-לה
 all that the man had done for her. את כל-אשר עשה-לה האיש:
 17. And she said, יז. ותאמר
 “He gave me these six measures of barley, שש-השעורים האלה נתן לי

⁵⁵ This was the Biblical form of oath. Because the concept of the Living God governed the relationship between Ruth and Boaz, they were able to meet at midnight in a lonely threshing floor and part from each other as pure as when they came.

⁵⁶ He wasn't concerned for his own reputation for he was known as a pious, old man who would not be accused of improper conduct. He was, however, very concerned about Ruth's reputation.—*Alshich*

According to the *Midrash*, Boaz was addressing himself to God. “All that night, Boaz was prostrate in prayer, ‘Rebboni shel olam, Sovereign of the Universe, You know that I have had no physical contact with her. I pray, let it not be known that the woman came into the threshing floor so that the Name of Heaven be not profaned through me.’”

⁵⁷ He accompanied her into the city gate lest she be molested at the early hour of pre-dawn.—*Midrash*

⁵⁸ We see here Naomi's anxiety to discover how her plan had worked. According to some, the words מי את בתי are translated: “What are you, my daughter?” Naomi asks her, “Are you still a maiden or a married woman?”

for he said to me, כִּי אָמַר אֵלַי
 'Do not go empty-handed אֶל־תָּבוֹאִי רִיקָם
 to your mother-in-law." אֶל־חֲמוּתָךְ:
 18. She then said, "Wait, my daughter, וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁכֵי בָתִּי
 until you know עַד אֲשֶׁר תֵּדְעִין
 what will come of the matter אֵיךְ יִפְּל דְּבָר
 for the man will not rest כִּי לֹא יִשְׁקֹט הָאִישׁ
 until he settles this matter today." כִּי אִם־כֵּלָה הַדָּבָר הַיּוֹם:

Chapter IV פֶּרֶק ד

1. Boaz had gone up to the gate וַיַּעַז עָלָה הַשָּׁעַר
 and was sitting there, and behold, וַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם וְהִנֵּה
 the [other] redeemer was passing by— הַגֹּאֵל עֹבֵר
 [the one] of whom Boaz had spoken— אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־בָּעֵז
 and he said [to him], וַיֹּאמֶר
 "Come over, sit down here, *Peloni Almoni*,"⁵⁹ סוּרָה שְׁבֵה־פֹה פְּלֹנִי אֶלְמוֹנִי
 and he came over and sat down. וַיָּסֶר וַיֵּשֶׁב:
 2. He [then] took ten men, ב. וַיִּקַּח עִשְׂרֵה אַנְשִׁים
 of the elders of the city and said, מִזִּקְנֵי הָעִיר וַיֹּאמֶר
 "Be seated here," and they sat down. שְׁבוּ־פֹה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ:
 3. Then he said to the redeemer, ג. וַיֹּאמֶר לַגֹּאֵל
 "The parcel of land חֶלְקֶת הַשָּׂדֶה
 which belonged to our brother, Elimelech, אֲשֶׁר לְאֶחָיו לְאֵלִימֶלֶךְ
 is up for sale by Naomi⁶⁰ מְכֻרָה גִּעְמִי
 who has returned from the Moabite country. הַשָּׂדֶה מִשְׁדֶּה מוֹאָב:
 4. And I decided to tell you about it, ד. וָאֲנִי אֶמְרָתִי אֶגְלֶה אֲזַנֶּךְ
 in these words— לְאֹמֶר
 Buy it in the presence קִנֵּה נִגְד

⁵⁹ The actual translation of the name *Peloni Almoni*, is "so and so." The person's real name was suppressed to indicate that he would not discharge his duty as a kinsman. His name was Tov (see Chapter 3:13), but his actions did not merit that he be recorded as Tov, "good."

⁶⁰ The literal meaning of *מְכֻרָה* is "has sold," but the context of the verse requires the translation to be either "intends to sell" or "is up for sale," because in fact, Naomi had not yet sold the field, as it appears from verse 5.

of those sitting here, הַיֹּשְׁבִים
 and in the presence וּנְגִיד
 of the elders of my people. זְקֵנֵי עַמִּי
 If you desire to redeem it, redeem it, אִם-תִּגְאֹל גְּאֹל
 and if it will not be redeemed, וְאִם-לֹא יִגְאֹל
 tell me, that I may know [now], הִגִּידָה לִּי וְאִדְעָה
 for beside you כִּי אֵין זֹלָתָךְ
 there is no one to redeem it, לְגֹאֹל
 and I am [next in line] after you.” וְאֲנִכִּי אַחֲרָיִךְ
 And he said, “I will redeem it.”⁶¹ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲנִכִּי אֶגְאֹל:
 5. Then, said Boaz, ה. וַיֹּאמֶר בּוֹאָז
 “On the day you acquire the field בְּיוֹם-קִנּוּתְךָ הַשָּׂדֶה
 from Naomi, מִיַּד נָעֲמִי
 and from Ruth, the Moabitess, וּמֵאֵת רֹת הַמּוֹאֲבִיָּה
 wife of the deceased [son], אִשְׁת־הַמֵּת
 you will have acquired it [in order]⁶² קִנִּיתָ
 to perpetuate the name of the deceased לְהַקִּים שֵׁם-הַמֵּת
 upon his inheritance.” עַל-נַחֲלָתוֹ:
 6. So the kinsman said, ו. וַיֹּאמֶר הַגְּאֹל
 “I am unable to redeem it for myself,⁶³ לֹא אוּכַל לְגְאֹל-לִי
 for I would mar my own inheritance,⁶⁴ כִּי-אֶשְׁחִית אֶת-נַחֲלָתִי
 redeem it for yourself גְּאֹל-לָךְ אֶתָּה
 and assume my right of redemption,⁶⁵ אֶת-גְּאֻלָּתִי
 for I am unable to redeem it.” כִּי לֹא-אוּכַל לְגְאֹל:

⁶¹ His willingness to fulfill his obligation was due to his belief that his duty would end with the purchase of the field. When he learned that the transaction would include marriage to Ruth, he withdrew.—*Malbim*

⁶² Boaz emphasized that the main thrust of the transaction was to perpetuate the name of the deceased, the actual purchase of the field was merely a means to this end.

⁶³ He implied that bringing a second wife into his home would cause strife and was thus unwilling to marry Ruth.—*Targum*

⁶⁴ Marrying a Moabite woman would cause a taint in his family pedigree, he thought. He was unaware that the law prohibited only the male Moabite from entering the Jewish ranks, but the females were permitted.—*Midrash*

⁶⁵ The greater the selfishness of the egoist, the more generous the measure of altruism he confers upon others.—*Rav Breuer*

7. This was the former custom in Israel,⁶⁶
 concerning redemption and exchange,
 to validate all [such] matters—
 a man would take off his shoe⁶⁷
 and give it to the other party—
 this was the form of validation in Israel.
8. So the redeemer said to Boaz,
 “Acquire it for yourself,”
 and so he took off his shoe.⁶⁸
9. Boaz then said to the elders
 and to all the people,
 “You are witnesses this day
 that I have acquired
 all that belonged to Elimelech,
 and to [his sons], Kilyon and Machlon,
 from the hand of Naomi.
10. And moreover, Ruth, the Moabitess,
 the wife of Machlon,
 I have taken [lit. acquired] as a wife,⁶⁹
 to perpetuate the name of the deceased
 upon his inheritance,⁷⁰
- ז. וזאת לפנים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל
 עַל-הַגְּאֻלָּה וְעַל-הַתְּמֻדָּה
 לְקַיֵּם כָּל-דָּבָר
 שֶׁלֹּא אִישׁ גָּעַל
 וְנָתַן לְרֵעֵהוּ
 וְזֹאת הַתְּעוּדָה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
 ח. וַיֹּאמֶר הַגָּאֵל לְבָעֹז
 קְנֵה-לָךְ
 וַיִּשְׁלַח גָּעַל:
 ט. וַיֹּאמֶר בָּעֹז לְזִקְנִים
 וְכָל-הָעָם
 עֲדִים אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם
 כִּי קִנִּיתִי
 אֶת-כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְאֵלִימֶלֶךְ
 וְאֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר לְכִלְיוֹן וּמַחֲלֹן
 מִיַּד נָעֲמִי:
 י. וְגַם אֶת-רוּת הַמֹּאבִּיטָה
 אִשְׁתִּי מַחֲלֹן
 קִנִּיתִי לִי לְאִשָּׁה
 לְהַקִּים שֵׁם-הַמֵּת
 עַל-נַחֲלָתוֹ

⁶⁶ This well known *kinyan*, or form of acquisition, had been used in earlier times but for some reason had been discontinued. Boaz now, as the head of the Sanhedrin, decided to reinstate it.

⁶⁷ According to *Ibn Ezra*, a shoe was used because it was the most accessible of all articles of clothing. A shirt or other such garments could not be removed very well as it would leave the individual bare. A distinction must be made between drawing off the shoe in this instance and in that of *chalitzah*, (Deuteronomy 25:9).

⁶⁸ It is not clear from the text whose shoe is intended, whether that of Boaz or the kinsman. This question is discussed in *Mesechet Bava Metzia*, 47a. The halachic decision is that the *rainment* must be the buyer's (קָלִי שֶׁל לֹקֵחַ) (see *Rambam*, *Sefer Kinyan*, *Hilchos Mechira*, 5:6).

⁶⁹ Boaz mentions his acquisition of Ruth separately, in order to make it clear that he does not consider the acquisition of a wife in the same manner as purchasing property. There is a great delicacy in the way in which Boaz describes his taking of Ruth as a wife. Although the same halachic terminology is used (קִנִּיתִי), the similarity ends there and never in Jewish law is the wife regarded as anything but a beloved and respected partner in the sacred duty of building a home.

⁷⁰ The constant association of Ruth with the property of her departed husband, will cause those who see her to remark that she was the former wife of Machlon. His name is thereby kept alive in the minds of all.—*Rashi*

that the name of the deceased be not cut off
from among his brethren,
and from the gate of his [native] place;
you are [hereby] witness this day."

11. And all the people said
who were at the gate,
and the elders [also] said:

"We are witnesses!

May Adonoy make this woman,
who is coming into your home,
like Rachel and like Leah,
who together built
the House of Israel.

May you perform deeds of valor in Ephrath,
and be famous in Bethlehem.

12. May your house be like the house of Peretz,
whom Tamar bore to Judah,
through the offspring
which Adonoy will give you
from this young woman."

13. So Boaz took Ruth
and she became his wife;
and he came to her.

And Adonoy made her conceive⁷¹
and she gave birth to a son.

14. And the women said to Naomi,
"Blessed is Adonoy,

Who has not withheld from you
a redeeming kinsman⁷² [even] this day;

וְלֹא־יִכָּרֵת שֵׁם־הַמֵּת
מִעַם אָחִיו

וּמִשְׁעַר מְקוֹמוֹ
עֵדִים אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם:
יֵא. וַיֹּאמְרוּ כָּל־הָעָם

אֲשֶׁר־בַּשַּׁעַר
וְהַזְקֵנִים
עֵדִים

יִתֵּן יְהוָה אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה
הַבָּאָה אֶל־בֵּיתְךָ
כְּרָחֵל | וְכִלְאָה
אֲשֶׁר בָּנוּ שְׂמִיָּהֶם
אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל

וַעֲשֵׂה־תִּיל בְּאַפְרָתָה
וּקְרֵא־שֵׁם בְּבֵית לְחָם:

יב. וַיְהִי בֵיתְךָ כְּבֵית פֶּרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה תָּמָר לַיהוּדָה
מִן־הַזָּרַע
אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן יְהוָה לָךְ
מִן־הַנְּעִרָה הַזֹּאת:

יג. וַיִּקַּח בָּעֶזְרָא אֶת־רוּת
וַתְּהִי־לּוֹ לְאִשָּׁה
וַיָּבֹא אֵלֶיהָ

וַיִּתֵּן יְהוָה לָהּ הַרְיוֹן
וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן:

יד. וַתֹּאמְרָנָה הַנָּשִׁים אֶל־נָעֲמִי
כְרוּךְ יְהוָה
אֲשֶׁר לֹא הִשְׁבִּית לָךְ
גֹּאֵל הַיּוֹם

⁷¹ It was certainly Divine Providence which enabled her to have children by the elderly Boaz although she was unable to conceive from her first husband who had been a young man.—*Malbim*

⁷² This child will redeem you from the tragedy of dying childless because he bears the soul of your son Machlon.—*Alshich*

- and may his name be famous in Israel. וַיִּקְרָא שְׁמוֹ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:
15. And he will be unto you a restorer of life, וְהָיָה לָךְ לְמַשְׁכִּיב נָפֶשׁ
and a support in your old age, וְלִבְלִלָל אֶת־שִׁבְתְּךָ
for your daughter-in-law כִּי בִלְתֶּךָ
who loves you has borne him, אֲשֶׁר־אֶהְבְּתְּךָ יִלְדֵתוֹ
[and] she is better to you אֲשֶׁר־הִיא טוֹבָה לָךְ
than seven sons. מִשִּׁבְעָה בָנִים:
16. And Naomi took the child, וַתִּקַּח נָעֲמִי אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד
and held it in her bosom, וַתִּשְׁתְּהוּ בְּחִיקָהּ
and she became his nurse. וַתִּהְיֶה־לוֹ לְאִמָּנָה:
17. The [woman] neighbors gave him a name, וַתִּקְרְאוּהוּ לֹא הַשְׁכֵּנוֹת שֵׁם
saying, "A son has been born to Naomi,"⁷³ לְאִמּוֹ יֶלֶד־בֶּן לְנָעֲמִי
and they called his name, Oved⁷⁴; וַתִּקְרְאוּהוּ שְׁמוֹ עוֹבֵד
he was the father of Yishai הוּא אָבִי־יִשָּׁי
[who was] the father of David. אָבִי דָוִד:
18. These are the generations of Peretz: וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת פֶּרֶץ
Perets begot Hetzron; פֶּרֶץ הוֹלִיד אֶת־חֶצְרוֹן:
19. and Hetzron begot Ram, יֵט. וְחֶצְרוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־רָם
and Ram begot Aminadav; וְרָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־עֲמִינָדָב:
20. and Aminadav begot Nachshon, כ. וְעֲמִינָדָב הוֹלִיד אֶת־נַחֲשׁוֹן
and Nachshon begot Salmah; וְנַחֲשׁוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־שַׁלְמָה:
21. and Salmon begot Boaz, כא. וְשַׁלְמוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־בּוֹאֵז
and Boaz begot Oved; וּבּוֹאֵז הוֹלִיד אֶת־עוֹבֵד:
22. and Oved begot Yishai; כב. וְעוֹבֵד הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִשָּׁי
and Yishai begot David.⁷⁵ וַיִּשָּׁי הוֹלִיד אֶת־דָּוִד:

⁷³ The Talmud comments: "Was it Naomi who bore him? Surely it was Ruth who bore him!" The Talmud concludes, Ruth indeed bore him but Naomi raised him; he was therefore called her son.—(*Mesechet Sanhedrin 19b*)

⁷⁴ A proper name for one who was expected by all to *serve* (עֹבֵד) God.

⁷⁵ Everything leads to the birth of David, and thus the whole purpose of Sefer Ruth, the Book of Ruth, is achieved in the final verse of this chapter.

Said Rabbi Eliezer, Boaz did his duty, Ruth did her part, and Naomi did hers. Now the Holy One, Blessed is He, said, "I will do what is Mine."

Preface to Shir Hashirim

Shir Hashirim, the Song of Songs, which is traditionally read in the synagogue on Shabbos Chol Hamoed Pesach, is one of the most remarkable books in the sacred Scriptures. On the face of it, it appears nothing more than an oriental love song. If that literal interpretation is accepted, there is no place for it in Holy Writ, and in fact it was not included without a controversy. It was only due to the strenuous advocacy of Rabbi Akiva that all doubts as to its propriety were dispelled. "Heaven forbid!" he said. "There could never be any doubt about the sanctity of Shir Hashirim. If the rest of the Writings are holy, then Shir Hashirim is the holy of holies." (Mishnah, Yedayim 3:5) He saw in it, the passionate yearning which subsists between God and Israel, a love which "Many waters cannot quench, neither can the rivers drown" (8:7).

Thus, Shir Hashirim is read on the Festival of Pesach as an expression of our love of God Who brought us out of bondage and took us as His beloved people. It also expresses our belief that His love for our Patriarchs was the Divine motivation for our redemption and our selection as His cherished nation.

Song of Songs שיר השירים

Chapter I פרק א

- א. שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים אֲשֶׁר לְשִׁלְמֹה:
 1. The song of songs which is Shlomo's.
- ב. יִשְׁקֵנִי
 2. Let him kiss me
 with the kisses of his mouth,¹
 for your love is dearer than wine.
- ג. לְרִיחַ שְׁמֶנֶה טוֹבִים
 3. Like the fragrance of good oils,
 your name is like flowing oil;²
 therefore young maidens love you.³
- ד. מִשְׁכְּנִי אֶחְרִיד נְרוּצָה
 4. Draw me, we will run after you;
 the king has brought me into his chambers,
 we will be glad and rejoice in you,
 we recall your love more than wine,
 they love you sincerely.⁴
- ה. שְׁחֹרָה אֲנִי וְנֹאזָה
 5. I am black, but comely,⁵
 daughters of Jerusalem;
 like the tents of Kedar,
 like the curtains of Shlomo.
 פִּירֵי עוֹת שְׁלֹמֹה:
- ו. אֶל-תִּרְאֵנִי
 6. Do not look upon me [with contempt]
 that I am so black,
 for the sun has tanned me;
 my mother's sons were incensed against me,
 they made me keeper of the vineyards,
 שְׁמֵנִי נָטְרָה אֶת-הַכֶּרְמִים

¹ When God gave the Torah to Israel, He spoke to them אֵל פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים, face to face. That expression of Divine love is sweeter to them than any delight. Israel has been assured by Him that He will again appear to them to explain the secrets and hidden meanings of the Torah. They beseech Him to fulfill His promise and thus they exclaim, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

² When fragrant oil is poured, its pleasing aroma is diffused for all to enjoy.—*Rashi*

³ "Young maidens" refers to the nations of the world.—*Rashi*

⁴ Israel recalls their love of God in their youth; their following Him through the desert without preparing provisions for themselves. He brought them "into His chambers" is a reference to the *Clouds of Glory* that hovered over them in the wilderness.—*Rashi*

⁵ Israel declares to the nations of the world, "I am black because of my sinful deeds but I am comely by virtue of the good deeds of my forefathers.—*Rashi*

- [but] my own vineyard I did not watch.⁶ בְּרָמִי שְׁלִי לֹא נִטְרַחֲתִי:
7. Tell me, you whom my soul loves, הִגִּידָה לִי שְׂאֵהֲבָה נִפְשִׁי
where do you graze your flock אֵיכָה תִרְעֶה
where do you rest your flock at noon; אֵיכָה תִרְבִּיץ בְּצֹהֲרִים
for why should I flit about שְׁלֵמָה אֶהְיֶה כְּעֹטֶיָה
around the flocks of your companions?⁷ עַל עֲדָרֵי חֲבֵרָיָה:
8. If you do not know אַם-לֹא תִדְעִי לָךְ
[you who are the] fairest of women; הִפְסֵה בְּנָשִׁים
go forth in the footsteps of the sheep צֵאִי-לָךְ בְּעֵקֶבְךָ הַצֹּאֵן
and pasture your kids וִרְעִי אֶת-גְּדֵי־יִתִּיךְ
near the dwellings of the shepherds.⁸ עַל מִשְׁכְּנוֹת הָרֹעִים:
9. To steeds in the chariots of Pharaoh ט. לְסִסְתִּי בִּרְכָבִי פָרֹעַה
I have likened you, my beloved. דְּמִיתִיךְ רַעֲיָתִי:
10. Your cheeks are comely with rows of gems י. נָאוּוּ לְחִיֶּיךָ בְּתַרְסִים
your neck with [pearl] necklaces. צֹואָרְךָ בְּחֲרוֹזִים:
11. Circlets of gold we will make for you יא. תּוֹרֵי זָהָב נַעֲשֶׂה-לָךְ
with spangles of silver.⁹ עִם נִקְדּוֹת הַכֶּסֶף:
12. While the king was at his table, יב. עַד-שֶׁהִמְלִךְ בְּמִסְבּוֹ
my spikenard gave out its fragrance. נִרְדִּי נֵתַן רִיחֹו:
13. A bundle of myrrh is my beloved to me, יג. צִרּוֹר הַמָּוֶד | דּוֹדִי לִי
between my breasts he shall lie.¹⁰ בֵּין שְׁדֵי יִלְיִן:
14. A cluster of henna is my beloved to me יד. אֶשְׁפֹּל הַכֶּפֶר | דּוֹדִי לִי
in the vineyards of En-gedi. בְּכַרְמֵי עֵין גִּדִּי:

⁶ They enticed me into idol-worship, thus I became blackened. They forced me to guard their vineyards, [their evil ways] and the vineyard which was my heritage from my ancestors, I did not guard.—*Rashi*

⁷ Israel says before Him, "Where will You pasture Your sheep [Israel] among these wolves [the nations] in whose midst they are?" "And where will You give them respite in this exile which is a time of distress. Noon is a time of distress for sheep because the sun is most intense and there is no relief from the heat.—*Rashi*

⁸ God speaks to Israel and tells them to reflect upon the ways of their forefathers and walk in their ways. In that manner they will be saved from the hand of their oppressors. "Shepherds" refers to the leaders of Israel, the Shepherds of God's holy flock.

⁹ These verses recall the great wealth Israel salvaged from the **בֵּית הַיָּם**, the booty of the Reed Sea, after the Egyptians were drowned.

¹⁰ Even though Israel betrayed God by sinning with the "golden calf," He commanded them to build the Tabernacle so that He would dwell among them. The most sacred place in the Tabernacle was the Ark and the Divine Presence rested **בֵּין שְׁנֵי כְּדֵי הָאָרוֹן**, between the two staves of the Ark which protruded through the Curtain like the breasts of a woman.—*Rashi*

15. Behold you are beautiful, my beloved, הִנֵּה יָפָה רַעְיָתִי טו.
 behold you are beautiful; הִנֵּה יָפָה
 your eyes are like doves. עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים:

16. You are handsome, my beloved,
most handsome;¹¹
indeed our bed is fresh.¹²

17. The beams of our houses are cedars,
our panels are cypresses.

Chapter II פרק ב

1. I am a rose of Sharon אֲנִי חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן א.
a rose of the valleys. שׁוֹשַׁנַּת הָעִמְקִים:

2. As a rose among the thorns, כְּשֹׁשַׁנָּה בֵּין הַחוֹחִים
so is my beloved among the daughters.¹³ כֵּן רַעֲיָתִי בֵּין הַבָּנוֹת:

3. As an apple tree
among the trees of the forest,
so is my beloved among the sons;
in its shade I delighted and sat,
its fruit was sweet to my palate.¹⁴

ד. הִבְיֵאֲנִי אֶל-בֵּית הַיֵּין וְדָגְלוּ עָלַי אַהֲבָה: 4. He brought me to the banqueting-house,¹⁵ and his banner is raised over me in love.¹⁶

5. Sustain me with dainty cakes סִמְכוּנִי בְּאִשִּׁישׁוֹת ה.
refresh my bed with [the scent of] apples; רִפְדוּנִי בְּתַפְּחוּחִים

¹¹ Israel was told that she was beautiful and is praised for her work in building the Tabernacle; but she says that the beauty is not hers, but God's for he overlooked their iniquities and caused His Presence to reside in their midst.—*Rashi*

¹² This sentence as well as the next refers to the **משכן**, the Tabernacle.

¹³ Just as the rose retains its beauty and redness although pricked by surrounding thorns, so does My people Israel maintain her faith despite the attempt of the nations to entice her to follow their strange gods.—*Rashi*

¹⁴ The apple tree is shunned by all people when the sun is overhead because it provides no shade. So all the nations fled from the Almighty on the day of the giving of the Torah. But I, Israel, delighted and sat in His "shadow."—*Rashi*

¹⁵ The **מִוֶּעַד**, Tent of the Tabernacle where the details and explanations of the Torah were expounded.—*Rashi*

¹⁶ The Divine Presence, God's banner, dwelt among Israel demonstrating His profound love for us to all the nations.—*Metsudas Dovid*

- for I am lovesick.¹⁷ כִּי־חֹלֶת אֶהְבֶּה אֹנִי:
6. His left hand was under my head ו. שְׂמָאלוֹ תַּחַת לְרֹאשִׁי
and his right would embrace me. ויְמִינוֹ תִּחְבֶּקֵנִי:
7. I bind you under oath, ז. הִשְׁבַּעְתִּי אֹתְכֶם
daughters of Jerusalem בְּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם
by the gazelles and the does of the field; בְּצִבְאוֹת אֹ אוֹ בְּאֵילוֹת הַשָּׂדֶה
that you do not cause hatred אִם־תִּעְצְרוּ |
nor disturb this love וְאִם־תִּעְזְרוּ אֶת־הָאֶהְבָּה
while it still pleases.¹⁸ עַד שֶׁתִּחְפֹּץ:
8. The voice of my beloved! Behold he comes; ח. קוֹל דּוֹדִי הִנֵּה־נֹה בָּא
leaping over the mountains, מְדַלֵּג עַל־הַהָרִים
skipping over the hills.¹⁹ מְקַפֵּץ עַל־הַגְּבָעוֹת:
9. My beloved resembles a gazelle ט. דּוֹמֶה דּוֹדִי לְצִבִּי
or a young hart; אֹ לְעַפְר הָאֵילִים
behold, he stands behind our wall, הִנֵּה־נֹה עוֹמֵד אַחֵר כְּתִלֵּנוּ
observing through the windows מַשְׁגִּיחַ מִן־הַחַלּוֹנוֹת
peering through the lattices.²⁰ מַצִּיץ מִן־הַתְּרָקִים:
10. My beloved spoke and said to me, י. עֲנֵה דּוֹדִי וְאָמַר לִי
"Rise up, my beloved, my fair one, קוּמִי לָךְ רַעֲיָתִי יִפְתִּי
and go forth.²¹ וּלְכִי־לָךְ:
11. For behold, the winter is past, יא. כִּי־הִנֵּה הַסֶּתֶר עָבַר
the rain is over, and gone.²² הַגֶּשֶׁם תָּלַף הַלֵּךְ לוֹ:

¹⁷ The Midrash remarks that *אֶשְׁכַּח* allude to the Halachos and *תַּפְחוּם* to the Haggados which are fragrant like apples. According to *Rashi*, Israel declares, "I am sick for want of His Divine love because I thirst for Him here in exile."

¹⁸ *Rashi* and others explain this verse as Israel adjuring her neighbors not to seize the opportunity of her sinful periods to provoke her to further sin and cause God to discard her. She declares that despite her sins, God's love is ingrained within her and He still desires her above all nations.

¹⁹ According to *Metsudas Dovid*, Israel voices her faith that the ultimate redemption will come speedily and that God's Divine love for her will be completely restored.

²⁰ *Rashi* interprets this verse as referring to the exodus from Egypt. Israel declares: "I thought I would be an *עֲנִיָּה* (a woman bereft of her husband while still legally bound to him) for many more days. Then suddenly—behold, He made it known that He was peering through the windows of heaven taking notice of my suffering, as it said [Exodus 3:7] "I have truly seen the affliction of My people."

²¹ God said to me through Moshe: "Rise up, *אֶעֱלֶה אִתְּךָ מִצְרַיִם*. I will bring you up and take you away from the affliction of Egypt."—*Rashi*

²² The days of bondage and slavery are over.—*Metsudas David*

12. The blossoms have appeared on the land,
the time of singing has come;
and the voice of the turtledove
is heard in our land.²³
13. The fig tree has produced its green figs,
and the grapevines tender grapes
give out their fragrance;
arise my beloved, my fair one,
and go forth.
14. My dove, in the clefts of the rock,
in the concealment of the cliff,²⁴
show me your countenance,
let me hear your voice;²⁵
for your voice is sweet
and your countenance is comely.
15. Seize for us the foxes,
little foxes that destroy vineyards
[for] our vineyards are with tender grapes.²⁶
16. My beloved is mine, and I am his,
who pastures among the roses.
17. Until the sun spreads
and the shadows flee;
you turned away, my beloved, and became
- יב. הנצנים נראו בארץ
עת הזמיר הגיע
וקול התור
נשמע בארצנו:
- יג. התאנה חנטה פליה
והגפנים | סמדר
גתנו ריח
קומי לך רעיתי יפתי
ולכי-לך:
- יד. יונתי בחגי הסלע
בסתור המדרגה
הראיני את-מראיך
השמיעני את-קולך
כי-קולך ערב
ומראיך נאה:
- טו. אחזו-לנו שועלים
שועלים קטנים מחבלים כרמים
וכרמינו סמדר:
טז. דודי לי ואני לו
הרעה בשושנים:
יז. עד שיפוח היום
ונסו הצללים
סב דמה-לך דודי

²³ *Rashi* interprets blossoms as a reference to Moshe and Aharon who have appeared to care for your needs, and the time has come when you are destined to sing a song praising God for splitting the Reed Sea. The voice of the great guide, מֹשֶׁה [Moshe], is heard when he issues directives to the people.

²⁴ *Rashi* explains that this verse refers to the time when Pharaoh was pursuing the Jews and found them encamped at the sea. They were trapped—with the sea before them and the Egyptians behind them. They resembled a dove fleeing from a hawk. It flew into the cleft of a rock and found a snake lurking there. It could not enter because of the snake nor turn back because of the hawk.

²⁵ Show me the quality of your deeds—to whom do you turn in time of distress; let Me hear your voice in prayer as it is said, וַיִּצְעֲקוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, and the Children of Israel cried out [prayed] to God.—*Rashi*

²⁶ The foxes refer to the Egyptians who sought to destroy Israel [God's vineyard] in its early formative stage.—*Rashi*

like a gazelle or a young hart לַצִּי אֹף לַעֲפֹר הָאֵילִים
on distant mountains.²⁷ עַל-הָרֵי בְּתָר:

Chapter III פֶּרֶק ג

1. On my bed at night, א. עַל-מִשְׁכְּבִי בַלַּיְלָוֹת
I sought him whom my soul loves;²⁸ בְּקִשְׁתִּי אֶת שְׂאֵהֶכָה נַפְשִׁי
I sought him but did not find him. בְּקִשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מָצָאתִיו:
2. I will rise now ב. אֶקּוּמָה נָא
and roam through the city, וְאֶסּוּבְכָה בְּעִיר
in the market places and in the streets, בַּשּׁוּקִים וּבִרְחֹבוֹת
I will seek him whom my soul loves;²⁹ אֶבְקֹשֶׁה אֶת שְׂאֵהֶכָה נַפְשִׁי
I sought him but did not find him. בְּקִשְׁתִּיו וְלֹא מָצָאתִיו:
3. The watchmen found me ג. מְצֹאוּנֵי הַשְּׁמָרִים
those who circle about the city;³⁰ הַסֹּבְבִים בְּעִיר
him whom my soul loves, אֶת שְׂאֵהֶכָה נַפְשִׁי
have you seen him?³¹ רְאִיתֶם:
4. Scarcely had I departed from them, ד. כִּמְעַט שָׁעַבְרָתִי מֵהֶם
when I found him whom my soul loves;³² עַד שֶׁמָּצָאתִי אֶת שְׂאֵהֶכָה נַפְשִׁי
I grasped him אֶחֱתִיתִיו
and would not let him go וְלֹא אֶרְפּוּנוּ
until I brought him to my mother's house עַד-שֶׁהֵבִיאתִיו אֶל-בֵּית אִמִּי
and to the chamber וְאֶל-חֲדָר
of her who conceived me.³³ הוֹרָתִי:

²⁷ According to *Rashi*, Israel's sin of the *golden calf* destroyed the intimacy of God's relationship with her and caused Him to swiftly depart from her and He became distant, far removed from her.

²⁸ During the long nights of exile, Israel seeks its former open, uninhibited relationship with God.—*Alshich*

²⁹ Israel is determined not to sleep through the night of exile, but actively searches out every possible avenue of rapprochement with God.—*Alshich*

³⁰ *Rashi* says that the 'watchmen' refers to Moshe and Aharon who guarded Israel from sin during the Egyptian exile. According to *Alshich* it also refers to Ezra and Nechemiah who were watchmen of Israel during the Babylonian exile.

³¹ Have you any word from Him? Have you been assured of His deliverance?—*Rashi*

³² Shortly after the departure (the death) of Moshe and Aharon, at the end of forty years in the wilderness, Israel saw that God was still with them as he helped them conquer the thirty one kings in the days of Yehoshua.—*Rashi*

³³ Israel declares that she did not rest until she built the Tabernacle at Shiloh.—*Rashi* According to *Alshich* the verse refers to the First Temple, the dwelling place of the Shechinah, and the Second Temple which was a mere chamber compared to the Divine grandeur of the First Temple.

5. I bind you under oath,
daughters of Jerusalem
by the gazelles and the does of the field;
that you do not cause hatred
nor disturb this love
while it still pleases.³⁴
6. Who is this ascending from the desert,
with palm-like pillars of smoke;³⁵
in a cloud of myrrh and frankincense,
of all the powders of the perfume seller?³⁶
7. Behold the bed of Shlomo,³⁷
sixty mighty men are around it;
of the mighty men of Israel.
8. All of them holding swords,
skilled in battle;³⁸
each with his sword at his side
for fear of the nights.³⁹
9. A canopy
has King Shlomo made
of the wood of Lebanon.⁴⁰
10. Its pillars he made of silver,
its covering of gold,
its curtain of purple wool;
its interior bedecked with love⁴¹
- ה. השבעתי אתכם
בנות ירושלם
בצבאות או באילות השדה
אם-תעזיבו
ואם-תעוררו את-האהבה
עד שתחפץ:
ו. מי זאת עלה מן-המדבר
בתימרות עשן
מקטרת מר ולבונה
מכל אבקת רוכל:
ז. הנה מטתו שלשלמה
ששים גברים סביב לה
מגברי ישראל:
ח. כלם אחזי חרב
מלמדי מלחמה
איש חרבו על-ירכו
מפחד בלילות:
ט. אפריון
עשה לו המלך שלמה
מעצי הלבנון:
י. עמודיו עשה כסף
רפידתו זהב
מרכבו ארגמן
תוכו רצוף אהבה

³⁴ See note 18.

³⁵ According to *Rashi*, Israel recalls when the Jews marched in the desert led by the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. (See Exodus 13:21.)

³⁶ This refers to the incense offering which was offered on the Inner Altar.—*Rashi*

³⁷ A reference to the *מִוֶּדֶר*, the Tabernacle, and *אֲרוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ*, the Holy Ark. This is in accordance with *Rashi* who interprets *לְשִׁלֹּמוֹ* as *לְשִׁלֹּם שָׁלוֹם*, the King to whom peace belongs. Thus, the bed of Shlomo refers to the resting place of the Divine Presence.

³⁸ This refers to those who are skilled in the *תּוֹרַת* של *חַרְבָּה*, the "warfare" of Torah learning.

³⁹ They are always on guard lest the Torah be forgotten and troubles befall them.—*Rashi*

⁴⁰ A reference to the Temple which was constructed from trees brought from Lebanon.

⁴¹ The interior of the Tabernacle and the Temple were arranged with objects symbolizing the love between God and Israel, such as the Ark, its cover, the Cherubim and the Tablets of the Law that were in the Ark.—*Rashi*

- from the daughters of Jerusalem. מִבָּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם:
 11. Go forth and gaze, daughters of Zion, יֵא. צֵאִינָה | וְרֹאִינָה בָּנוֹת צִיּוֹן
 upon King Shlomo; בַּמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה
 upon the crown בַּעֲטָרָה
 with which his mother adorned him שְׁעֵטְרָה-לּוֹ אִמּוֹ
 on the day of his wedding, בְּיוֹם חֲתָנָתוֹ
 and on the day his heart rejoiced.⁴² וּבְיוֹם שְׂמֵחַת לְבוֹ:

Chapter IV פרק ד

1. Behold you are beautiful, my beloved, א. הִנֵּךְ יְפֵה רַעֲיָתִי
 behold you are beautiful,⁴³ הִנֵּךְ יְפֵה
 your eyes are like doves⁴⁴ עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים
 from within your kerchief; מִבְּעֵד לְצַמְתְּךָ
 your hair is like a flock of goats שְׁעָרְךָ כְּעֶדֶר הָעִזִּים
 descending from Mount Gilead.⁴⁵ שֹׁגְלָשׁוֹ מֵהָר גִּלְעָד:
 2. Your teeth are like a counted flock ב. שְׁנֵיךָ כְּעֶדֶר הַקְּצוּבוֹת
 which have come up from the washing; שְׁעָלוּ מִן-הַרְחֻצָּה
 all of which are perfect שְׁכֵלָם מִתְאִימוֹת
 and none are blemished among them.⁴⁶ וְשְׁכֵלָה אֵין בָּהֶם:
 3. Like a scarlet thread are your lips, ג. כְּחוּט הַשָּׁנִי שֶׁפְּתוּחֶיךָ
 and your speech is comely; וּמִדְּבָרְךָ נְאוּה
 like a slice of pomegranate⁴⁷ כְּפֶלֶח הָרְמוֹן
 are your cheeks רְקִיתְךָ
 from within your kerchief. מִבְּעֵד לְצַמְתְּךָ:

⁴² This refers to the day of the giving of the Torah when Israel crowned Him as their King and accepted His yoke.

⁴³ God speaks to Israel and praises her, declaring that He is pleased with her offerings.—*Rashi*

⁴⁴ Your characteristics are like the dove which is loyal to its mate. When it is slaughtered it does not fidget but stretches forth her neck submissively. So have you bent your shoulder to bear My yoke and My awe.—*Rashi*

⁴⁵ Even the most common people [whose merit is concealed] among you, are as dearly beloved to Me as Yaakov and his sons who descended the slopes of Mount Gilead when they were pursued by Laban. [Genesis 31:23]—*Rashi*

⁴⁶ This is said in reference to the 12,000 men who fought against Midian [Numbers 31:5]; not one of them was 'blemished' even with suspicion of lewdness. So chaste were they that they brought offerings of atonement even for evil thoughts they might have had.—*Rashi*

⁴⁷ As numerous as a pomegranate's seeds are the merits of even the most unworthy among you.—*Rashi*

4. Your neck is like the Tower of David,
built as a model of beauty;⁴⁸
a thousand shields are hung upon it,
all the quivers of the mighty.
5. Your bosom is like two fawns,
twins of a gazelle⁴⁹
who pasture among the roses.
6. Until the sun spreads
and the shadows flee;⁵⁰
I will go to Mount Moriah
and to the hill of frankincense.
7. You are completely beautiful, my beloved,
and are without blemish.⁵¹
8. With me [will you come] from Lebanon
O bride,
with me from Lebanon will you come;⁵²
you will look from the peak of Amana,
from the peaks of Senir of Hermon,
from the lions' dens,
from the mountains of leopards.
9. You captured my heart, my sister, O bride;
you captured my heart
with but one of your eyes,
with one necklace of your necklaces.⁵³

ד. כַּמִּגְדֵּל דָּוִיד צִוְּאֹהָךְ
בְּנוֹי לְחִלּוּפֵיזוֹת
אֶלֶף הַמָּגֶן חֲלוּי עָלֶיךָ
כָּל שְׁלֹטֵי הַגְּבָרִים:
ה. שְׁנֵי שְׁדֵיךְ כְּשְׁנֵי עֶפְרַיִם
תְּאֻמֵּי צִבְיָה
הֹרְעִים בְּשׂוֹשְׁנֵים:
ו. עַד שִׁפּוֹחַ הַיּוֹם
וְנָסוּ הַצִּלָּלִים
אֵלֶיךָ לִי אֶל־הַר הַמֹּרִי
וְאֶל־גִּבְעַת הַלְבֹנָה:
ז. כָּלֶיךָ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי
וּמוֹם אֵין בָּךְ:
ח. אִתִּי מִלְכָּנוֹן
כִּלָּה
אִתִּי מִלְכָּנוֹן תְּבוֹאִי
תְּשׁוּרִי | מִרְאשׁ אָמָנָה
מִרְאשׁ שְׁנִיר וְחֶרְמוֹן
מִמְעֲנוֹת אֲרִיזוֹת
מִהַרְרֵי נְמֵרִים:
ט. לִבִּי תָפְנִי אַחֲתִי כִלָּה
לִבִּי תָפְנִי
בְּאַחַת מֵעֵינֶיךָ
בְּאַחַת עֲנָק מִצְוֵרֶיךָ:

⁴⁸ The 'Tower of David' refers to the righteous who stand erect as a tower even amid hardship and persecution, without yielding to idolatrous practices. Thus the Sages of Israel serve as a model of behavior for all to behold.—*Rashi*

⁴⁹ According to *Rashi* שְׁנֵי שְׁדֵיךְ, your two breasts, refers to Moshe and Aharon who nursed the nation of Israel in their infant state as a people. They are likened to the twins of a gazelle because they were equal to each other. Others say that it refers to the Written and Oral Torah, which like twins complement one another.

⁵⁰ See notes to 2:17.

⁵¹ When Israel stood at Sinai to accept the Torah, they were all in a state of total perfection. There were no lame, nor blind nor deaf, nor imbeciles, nor lepers, nor those who were unclean.—*Midrash*

⁵² God says to His people, "With Me will you be exiled from the Temple [Lebanon]." (See Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy 3:25 where he translates וְהִלְכְּנוּ as גִּיּוֹת מִקְדָּשָׁא.)

⁵³ The Almighty says to Israel, "You captured My heart with but one of your [many] virtues, with your fulfillment of even one of the precepts that adorn you like a necklace.—*Rashi*

10. How beautiful is your love
my sister, O bride;
how superior is your love to wine,
and the fragrance of your oils
to all perfumes.

י. מֵה־יָפֹךְ דִּלִּיךְ
אֲחֹתִי כִלָּה
מֵה־טֹבֵד דִּלִּיךְ מִיַּיִן
וְרִיחַ שְׁמֵנֶיךָ
מִכָּל־בְּשָׂמִים:

11. Your lips drip flowing honey, O bride;
honey and milk are under your tongue,⁵⁴
and the fragrance of your garments
is like the fragrance of Lebanon.⁵⁵

יא. נִפְתַּח תְּטַפְּנָה שְׁפָתֶיךָ כִלָּה
דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב תִּתַּח לְשׁוֹנֶךָ
וְרִיחַ שְׁלֹמֶיךָ
כְּרִיחַ לְבָנוֹן:

12. A locked garden is my sister, O bride;
a locked up spring,
a sealed fountain.⁵⁶

יב. גֵּן | נָעוּל אֲחֹתִי כִלָּה
גֵּל נָעוּל
מַעְיָן חֲתוּם:

13. Your arid fields
are a pomegranate orchard
with luscious fruits;⁵⁷
henna with spikenard.

יג. שְׂדֵיךָ
פְּרָדֶם רְמוֹנִים
עִם פְּרֵי מְגֵדִים
כְּפָרִים עִם־נֹרְדִים:

14. Spikenard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with all the trees of frankincense;
myrrh and aloes
with all the major spices.

יד. נֹרְד | וְכַרְפֹּס
קִנְיָה וְקַנְמֹן
עִם כָּל־עֵצֵי לְבוֹנָה
מֵר וְאַהֲלֹת
עִם כָּל־רֵאשֵׁי בְשָׂמִים:

15. You are a garden spring,
a well of living waters;
and flowing streams from Lebanon.

טו. מַעְיָן חַיִּים
בְּאֵר מַיִם חַיִּים
וְנוֹזְלִים מִן־לְבָנוֹן:

16. Awake, wind from the north
and come, wind from the south,
blow upon my garden
so that its fragrance may flow;

טז. עֹרִי צָפוֹן
וּבֹאִי תִימָן
הַפִּיחִי גִנִּי
יִזְלוּ בְשָׁמָיו

⁵⁴ The sweetness of Torah flows from your lips.

⁵⁵ Garments refer to *מדות*, character traits, which like garments are not inborn but must be acquired and worn. The fragrance of garments symbolize the impression they make on others. Similarly, one's *מדות* should be fragrant, leaving a pleasing impression on others.—*Vilna Gaon*

⁵⁶ This is said in reference to the modesty of the women in Israel who shun immorality.

⁵⁷ Even the least gifted [the dry ones] among you are like a pomegranate orchard with luscious fruits.

let my beloved come to his garden,
and eat its luscious fruit.⁵⁸

יבא דודי לגנו
ויאכל פרי מגדיו:

Chapter V פרק ה

1. I have come to my garden,⁵⁹

א. באתי לגני

my sister, O bride,

אחתי כלה

I have gathered my myrrh with my spice,⁶⁰

איתי מורי עם־בשמי

I have eaten my sugar cane with my honey,

אכלתי יערי עם־דבשי

I have drunk my wine with my milk;⁶¹

שתיתי ייני עם־חלבי

eat [my] friends,

אכלו רעים

drink and become intoxicated,

שתו ושכרו

[my] beloved ones.⁶²

דודים:

2. I slept but my heart was awake;⁶³

ב. אני ישנה ולבי ער

a sound! my beloved knocks,

קול | דודי דופק

open for me, my sister, my love,

פתחי־לי אחתי רעיתי

my dove, my perfection,⁶⁴

יונתי תמתי

for my head is drenched [as though] with dew,

שראשי נמלא־טל

my sidelocks drip with the rains of night.⁶⁵

קוצותי רסיסי לילה:

3. I have removed my robe,

ג. פשטתי את־פתנתי

how can I put it on?

איככה אלבשנה

I have washed my feet,

רחצתי את־רגלי

how can I soil them?⁶⁶

איככה אטנפם:

⁵⁸ Israel appeals to the Holy One, blessed is He, to once again dwell in the Temple [His garden] and savor the offerings [the luscious fruits] which we will bring there.

⁵⁹ When the Tabernacle was completed, "the glory of Adonoy filled the Tabernacle." [See Midrash to Numbers 13:2]—*Rashi*

⁶⁰ A reference to the incense offered at the dedication of the Tabernacle. This offering was brought by the *נשיאים*, Princes of the tribes.—*Rashi*

⁶¹ This refers to the *נזקים*, wine libations.—*Rashi*

⁶² According to *Rashi*, 'Eat my friends' refers to the *kohanim* who were given portions of many offerings, and the rest of the verse refers to Israel who were permitted to partake of the meat of the *שלמים*, peace offerings.

⁶³ Israel recalls how she neglected the service of God as if she were asleep, but nevertheless God, the Rock of her heart was wakeful to guard her.—*Rashi*

⁶⁴ God attempts to arouse Israel to repentance with words of endearment.

⁶⁵ These expressions give voice to Israel's weariness from the hardships she endures in exile. Our heads are drenched with perspiration like dew and rain.—*Etz Yosef*

⁶⁶ I have taken off my robe of devotion and adapted the ways of others, idolatrous peoples.—*Rashi*. God answers Israel, "I have washed My feet of your uncleanness, how can I soil them by returning My Presence in your midst."

4. My beloved sent forth his hand
from the portal,
and my innards longed for him.
5. I arose to open for my beloved;
and my hands dripped myrrh,
and my fingers flowed with myrrh
from the handles of the lock.⁶⁷
6. I opened for my beloved,
but my beloved had vanished and gone;
my soul departed as he spoke,
I sought him but could not find him,
I called him but he would not answer.⁶⁸
7. The watchmen found me,
those who go about the city,
they struck me, they wounded me;⁶⁹
they stripped my ornament from me,⁷⁰
[even] the guards of the wall.
8. I bind you under oath,
daughters of Jerusalem;
when you find my beloved,
what will you tell him?
that I am lovesick [for him].⁷¹
9. With what does your beloved
excel another beloved,
most beautiful among women?⁷²
- ד. דודי שלח ידו
מן-החור
ומעי המו עליו:
- ה. קמתי אני לפתח לדודי
ונידי נטפוי-מור
ואצבעתי מור עבר
על כפות המנעול:
- ו. פתחתי אני לדודי
ודודי חמק עבר
נפשי יצאה כדברו
בקשתיהו ולא מצאתיהו
קראתי ולא ענני:
- ז. מצאני השמרים
הסובבים בעיר
הפוני פצעוני
נשאו את-רדדיל מעלי
שמרי החמות:
- ח. השבעתי אתכם
בנוח ירושלם
אם-תמצאו את-דודי
מה-תגידו לו
שחולת אהבה אני:
- ט. מה-דודך
מדוד
היפה בנשים

⁶⁷ Israel reacts to God's admonition. She declares that she is prepared to purify herself with precious ointments, symbolizing her repentance, thus removing the foul odor of the past.—*Rashi, Alshich*

⁶⁸ When Israel finally repented and opened her heart to God, her repentance did not nullify the decree completely but it did help to ease the way for rebuilding the Temple when they finally returned from exile.—*Rashi*

⁶⁹ The watchmen refers to Nebuchadnezzar and his army who became the "the watchmen" of the city.—*Rashi*

⁷⁰ This refers to the brutality of the destruction.

⁷¹ Israel adjures the nations of the world who will ascend to Jerusalem in the time to come. 'When you see the Almighty on the day of Judgment, tell Him that I endured all the sufferings of the exile, but my sickness is not physical—it is a sickness of love for Him.—*Vilna Gaon*

⁷² The nations respond, 'With what does your beloved God excel all others that you are ready to suffer so greatly for His Name.'—*Rashi*

- With what does your beloved
excel another beloved,
that you bind us under oath?
10. My beloved is pure white and ruddy,
surrounded by myriads.⁷³
11. His head is [like] finest gold,⁷⁴
his locks hang,
they are raven-black.⁷⁵
12. His eyes are like doves
upon brooks of water;
bathed in milk,
well set in their fullness.
13. His cheeks are like a bed of spice,
like towers of perfumes;
his lips are like roses,
dripping [with] flowing myrrh.⁷⁶
14. His hands are like rolls of gold
studded with precious gems;⁷⁷
his innards sparkle like ivory,
overlaid with sapphires.⁷⁸
15. His legs are like pillars of marble
set in sockets of fine gold;
his appearance is like Lebanon
chosen like the cedars.
- מה-דודך
מדוד
שפכה השבעתנו:
י. דודי צח ואדום
דגול מרבבה:
יא. ראשו כהם פז
קנצותיו תלמלים
שחרות כעורב:
יב. עיניו כיונים
על-אפיקי מים
רחצות בחלב
ישבות על-מלאה:
יג. לחיו כערוגת הפשם
מגדלות מרקחים
שפתותיו שושנים
נטפות מור עבר:
יד. ידיו גלילי זהב
ממלאים בתרשיש
מעיו עשת שן
מעלפת ספירים:
טו. שוקיו עמודי שש
מיסדים על-אדני-פז
מראהו בלבנון
בחור בארזים:

⁷³ Israel declares, 'My beloved God is pure and cleanses iniquity, and ruddy with vengeance to punish His enemies; He is surrounded by myriads of angels who serve Him.'—*Rashi*

⁷⁴ According to *Rashi* ראשו, His head, means His beginning, and refers to the beginning of the Ten Commandments which Israel heard directly from God. Those words, 'I am Adonoy, your God' shone and sparkled like the finest gold.

⁷⁵ This alludes to the tradition that the Torah was written, אש שחורה על גבי אש לבנה, black fire upon white fire.—*Rashi*

⁷⁶ This refers to God's utterances at Sinai. The Talmud says 'With every word that went forth from the mouth of God, the whole world filled with [the fragrance of] spices.—*Mesechet Shabbos 88b*

⁷⁷ The Ten Commandments are like scrolls of gold studded with gems because all 613 Commandments are alluded to therein.—*Rashi*

⁷⁸ This refers to סקר ונקרא, Leviticus, which like the intestines, are in the midst of the body of Torah.—*Rashi*

16. [The words of] his palate are sweet, חכו ממקלים
and he is all delight; וכלו מהמדים
this is my beloved, זה דודי
and this is my friend, וזה רעי
O daughters of Jerusalem. בנות ירושלם:

Chapter VI פרק ו

1. Where has your beloved gone אנה הלך דודי
O fairest among women? היפה בנשים
Where has your beloved turned אנה פנה דודי
that we may seek him with you?⁷⁹ ונבקשנו עמו:
2. My beloved has gone down to his garden, ב. דודי ירד לגנו
to the beds of spices;⁸⁰ לערגות הפשם
to graze in the gardens לרעות בגנים
and to gather roses.⁸¹ וללקט שושנים:
3. I am my beloved's ג. אני לדודי
and my beloved is mine, ודודי לי
who grazes among the roses. הרועה בשושנים:
4. You are beautiful, my beloved, as Tirzah,⁸² ד. יפה את רעיתי כתרצה
comely as Jerusalem, נאנה בירושלם
awesome as the hosts [of angels]. אימה בנגלות:
5. Turn your eyes away from me, ה. הסבי עיניך מנגדי
for they made me haughty;⁸³ שהם הרהיבני
your hair is like a flock of goats שערוך כעדר העזים

⁷⁹ The nations taunt and harrass Israel, "Why has Your God forsaken you?"—*Rashi*

⁸⁰ According to *Rashi*, *garden* refers to the Temple, and *beds of spices* to the incense—altar. When the Temple is built, God's Divine Presence will return to us.

⁸¹ In the meantime, He rests His Divine Presence in the synagogue and at the houses of study where He listens to those who converse in Torah, gathering their merits [roses] and recording them in a Book of Remembrance before Him.—*Rashi*

⁸² *Rashi*, quoting the *Sifri*, interprets *תרצה* not as a place but as a form of the word *רצויה* *pleasing, desirable*. Accordingly, God praises Israel saying: "You are fair my beloved, when you are desirable to Me." When Israel performs the mitzvos which God desires, she is beautiful in His eyes.

⁸³ God declares that it will be impossible to return the Ark, the Ark Cover and the Cherubim to the Second Temple because they inspired Him to manifest a special love for Israel which caused them to take Him for granted and led them to betray Him.

- descending from Mount Gilead.⁸⁴ שְׁגָלְשׁוּ מִן־הַגִּלְעָד:
6. Your teeth are like a counted flock ו. שֶׁנִּיחַ כְּעֶדֶר הָרְחֵלִים
which have come up from the washing; שָׁעָלוּ מִן־הַרְחֵצָה
all of which are perfect שְׁפָלָם מִתְּאִימוֹת
and none are blemished among them.⁸⁵ וְשֶׁפֶלָה אֵין בָּהֶם:
7. Like a slice of pomegranate⁸⁶ ז. כְּפֶלַח הָרְמוֹן
are your cheeks וְקִלְחֶךָ
from within your kerchief. מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ:
8. There are sixty queens ח. שְׁשִׁים הֶמְהָ מַלְכוֹת
and eighty concubines, וְשְׁמֹנִים פִּילְגֻשִׁים
and young maidens without number.⁸⁷ וְנַעֲלָמוֹת אֵין מִסְפָּר:
9. But she is unique, my dove, my perfect one, ט. אַחַת הִיא יוֹנָתִי תְּמִימִי
she is unique to her mother, אַחַת הִיא לְאִמָּהּ
she is pure to her who begot her;⁸⁸ בְּרָהּ הִיא לְיולֶדְתָּהּ
daughters saw her and acclaimed her, רְאוּהָ בָנוֹת וַיֵּאָשְׁרוּהָ
queens and concubines, and they praised her. מַלְכוֹת וּפִילְגֻשִׁים וַיְהַלְלוּהָ:
10. Who is this that gazes down י. מִי־זֹאת הַנֹּשֶׁקֶפָה
like the [breaking] dawn, כְּמו־שַׁחַר
beautiful as the moon, bright as the sun, יָפָה כְּלִבְנָה בָּרָה כְּחֶמֶה
awesome as the hosts [of angels]?⁸⁹ אִימָה בְּנֹדְגָלוֹת:
11. I went down to the garden of nuts,⁹⁰ יא. אֶל־גִּנַּת אֲגוֹז יֵרְדָתִי
to see the moist plants of the valley; לְרֹאוֹת בְּאֶפֶי הַנָּחַל
to see whether the vine had blossomed, לְרֹאוֹת הִפְרִתָּהּ הַגֶּפֶן

⁸⁴ See note 45.

⁸⁵ See note 46.

⁸⁶ See note 47.

⁸⁷ According to *Rashi*, the sixty queens refers to the heads of family who were the descendants of Avrohom: sixteen of Keturah, Yitzchok and his two sons, Yishmael and his twelve family heads, the twelve sons of Yaakov, and the sixteen family heads of Eisav. The eighty concubines refers to Noach and his offspring until Avrohom. [The count of all the offspring of those who were saved in the Ark totaled eighty.] And just as queens are superior to concubines, so are Avrohom and his descendants more esteemed than all others.

⁸⁸ This refers to the perfect integrity of Yaakov's children who were without blemish [מִקְחוֹ שְׁלֵמָה].

⁸⁹ When Israel marched forth from Egypt surrounded by the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, they were awesome in the eyes of the nations.

⁹⁰ When one looks at a nut, he sees only a shell but its contents are not visible. Similarly, Israel is modest, her scholars are unpretentious; but when they are examined they are found to be full of wisdom.—*Rashi*

if the pomegranates had sprouted. הִנָּצוּ הָרְמָנִים:
 12. I did not know,⁹¹ יב. לֹא יָדַעְתִּי
 my soul set me נַפְשִׁי שָׁמַתָּנִי
 like chariots of a noble people.⁹² מִרְכָּבוֹת עַמִּי נָדִיב:

Chapter VII פרק ז

- א. שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי הַשּׁוֹלֵמִית
 turn back, turn back, שׁוּבִי שׁוּבִי
 that we may observe you;⁹³ וְנִחְזֶה־בָּךְ
 what can you see [offer] the perfect one מִה־תִּחְזֹוּ בַּשּׁוֹלֵמִית
 that equals the encirclement of the camps?⁹⁴ כִּמְחַלֵּת הַמַּחֲנֵי:
 ב. מַה־יָּפּוּ פַעְמֶיךָ בְּנָעָלִים
 O daughter of nobles;⁹⁵ בַּת־נָדִיב
 the roundness of your flanks, חֲמוּקֵי יָרֵכֶיךָ
 are like jewels, כִּמּוֹ חֲלָאִים
 the work of a craftsman.⁹⁶ מַעֲשֵׂה יָדֵי אָמֵן:
 ג. שְׂרָרֶךָ אֶגֶן הַסֶּהֶר
 which lacks not for mixed wines;⁹⁷ אֶל־יִחְסַר הַמִּזְג
 your stomach is like a heap of wheat,⁹⁹ בְּטֶנֶךָ עֲרֶמֶת חֲטִיִּם

⁹¹ Israel exclaims that she did not know how to guard herself from sin.

⁹² I brought these evils upon myself through groundless hatred and controversy, and thus became like a chariot ridden upon by the nobles of other nations.

⁹³ According to *Rashi* the nations call to Israel [who is perfect in her faith] enticing her to turn away from Him and join them.

⁹⁴ Israel responds, saying to them, what honor can you offer me that compares to the glory of the banners of the encircling desert camps [as I left Egypt].—*Rashi*

⁹⁵ How fair were your feet when you went up to Jerusalem on your pilgrimages to the Temple to celebrate Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot.—*Rashi*

⁹⁶ According to the *Targum*, this is said in reference to their children, products of their loins who are beautiful as the brilliant jewels of the Breastplate which was made for Aharon by Bezalel, the master craftsman.

⁹⁷ This is a reference to the *לשכת הנזרים*, the Chamber of Hewn Stone, the seat of the Sanhedrin which was situated at the navel [i.e. the center] of the world, and the members of the Sanhedrin were seated in a circle, like the crescent moon.—*Rashi*

⁹⁸ Just as the bowl will not lack for drink so too the Sanhedrin will be a never-ending source of wisdom. [Wine often used in an allegorical manner to describe the wisdom of Torah].—*Rashi*

⁹⁹ Wheat is the staple of life and just as everyone benefits from wheat so do all benefit from the wise decisions of the Sanhedrin.—*Mesechet Sanhedrin 37a*

- hedged about with roses.¹⁰⁰ סוגה בשושנים:
4. Your two breasts are like two fawns,¹⁰¹ ד. שני שדיך כשני עפרים
twins of a gazelle. תאמי צביה:
5. Your neck is like an ivory tower;¹⁰² ה. צוארך כמגדל השן
your eyes are like pools in Heshbon, יניך ברכות בשבון
at the gate of the populated city, על-שער בתי-רבים
your face is like a tower of Lebanon אפך כמגדל הלבנון
looking out as far as Damascus.¹⁰³ צופה פני דמשק:
6. That which is upon your head ו. ראשך עליך
is like Mount Carmel,¹⁰⁴ בכרמל
and the braid of your head ודלת ראשך
is like [royal] purple wool; כארגמן
your King is bound in its tresses.¹⁰⁵ מלך אסור ברהטים:
7. How beautiful and pleasant are you; ז. מה-יפית ומה-נעמת
a love with delights.¹⁰⁶ אהבה בתענוגים:
8. Such is your stature, ח. זאת קומתך
likened to a [stately] palm tree;¹⁰⁷ דמתה לתמר
and your bosom is like clusters.¹⁰⁷ ושדיך לאשכולות:
9. I said, I will ascend the palm tree, ט. אמרתי אעלה בתמר

¹⁰⁰ A hedge of roses is hardly an imposing barrier and so too the lightest barrier is sufficient to keep the nation of Israel from sin. This refers to the words of Torah that are as delicate as roses and yet suffice to deter us from sin.—*Rashi*

¹⁰¹ This refers to the two tablets of the Ten Commandments; it might also refer to the king and the *Kohein Gadol*.—*Rashi*

¹⁰² The Sanctuary and the Altar which were erect and tall, as well as the seat of the Sanhedrin, provided Israel with strength and protection like an ivory tower.—*Rashi*

¹⁰³ This is an allusion to the prophecy that in the future the gates of Jerusalem will expand until Damascus.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁴ A reference to the *tefillin* of the head, of which it is said: "And all the peoples of the earth will see that the Name of Adonoy is called upon you and they will fear you." (Devarim 28:10) The *tefillin* are the strength of Israel and are as awe-inspiring as rocky mountains, of which Mount Carmel is the most prominent.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁵ This refers to the braided locks of the Nazirite and alludes to the fact that God's Name is associated with the hair of the Nazirite.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁶ A spiritual love that is befitting to delight in.—*Rashi*

¹⁰⁷ When all the nations succumbed to Nevuchadnezzar and kneeled to the statue, Israel stood upright as the palm tree. Daniel, Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah were likened to the breasts of Israel for as breasts give nourishment to the suckling child, they provided spiritual nourishment, inspiring everyone with the knowledge that there is no God like the God of Israel.—*Rashi*

- I will grasp its branches;¹⁰⁸ אֲחֻזָּה בְּסִנְסְנֵי
 and now, let your bosom וְהָיָה גֵּן שְׂדֵיךָ
 remain like clusters of the vine,¹⁰⁹ כְּאֶשְׁכְּלוֹת הַגֶּפֶן
 and the fragrance of your face וְרֵיחַ אִפְּךָ
 like apples. כְּתַפּוּחִים:
10. And let your speech be like good wine;¹¹⁰ י. וְחִלְךָ כִּיֵּין הַטּוֹב
 it flows for my beloved in sincerity, הוֹלֵךְ לְדוּדִי לְמִישְׁרִים
 causing the lips of sleepers to murmur.¹¹¹ דוֹבֵב שִׁפְתֵי יְשָׁנִים:
11. I am my beloved's יא. אֲנִי לְדוּדִי
 and he longs for me. וְעָלִי תִשְׁוֹקָתוֹ:
12. Come, my beloved, יב. לֵבָה דוּדִי
 let us go out to the field, נֵצֵא הַשָּׂדֶה
 let us lodge in the villages. נָלִינָה בְּכִפְרִים:
13. Let us rise early for the vineyards,¹¹² יג. וְנִשְׁפִּימָה לְכַרְמִים
 let us see if the vine has blossomed, נִרְאֶה אִם-פָּרְחָה הַגֶּפֶן
 if the tender grapes have appeared, פָּתַח הַסְּמֹדֶר
 if the pomegranates are in bloom;¹¹³ הִנָּצוּ הָרְמוֹנִים
 there I will give my love to you.¹¹⁴ שָׁם אֶתֵּן אֶת-דֹּדִי לִּי:
14. The baskets emit fragrance, יד. הַדִּוְדָּאִים נִתְנוּ-רֵיחַ
 and at our door are all luscious fruits, וְעַל-פֶּתְחֵינוּ כָּל-מִגְדִּים
 both new and old; חֲדָשִׁים גַּם-יְשָׁנִים
 my beloved, I have kept them for you. דוּדִי צִפְנֹתִי לָךְ:

¹⁰⁸ God declares that He is elevated through Israel's actions and loyalty through which His Name is sanctified among the nations of the world, and thus He declares that He will grasp and cleave to the [children of Israel] branches of this palm tree.

¹⁰⁹ See note 107. This refers to the righteous of each generation.

¹¹⁰ Let your response to taunts of the nations be as clear and strong as the finest wine.—*Rashi*

¹¹¹ Israel's response to them is "I am my Beloved's [God's]" (see next verse), is such an expression of intense love that even its ancestors [who are asleep] will rejoice and utter thanks for their lot.—*Rashi*

¹¹² This is a reference to synagogues and houses of study [where Jews assemble at dawn].—*Rashi*

¹¹³ According to *Rashi* the words "If the vine has blossomed" refers to those who are versed only in the Scripture. "If the tender grapes have appeared," is an allusion to those who are versed in Mishnah, and "If the pomegranates are in blossom" refers to those who are versed in Talmud. Each stage suggests a higher degree of ripeness with the students of Talmud representing the level of maturity in Torah wisdom.

¹¹⁴ There I will show you My glory and My greatness, the praiseworthiness of My sons and daughters.

Chapter VIII פרק ח

1. If only you were a brother to me,
 who had nursed at my mother's bosom;¹¹⁵
 when I would find you outside
 I would kiss you,
 and no one would scorn me.¹¹⁶
2. I would lead you, I would bring you
 to my mother's house
 that you should teach me;¹¹⁷
 I would give you spiced wine to drink,¹¹⁸
 of the nectar of my pomegranate.
3. His left hand is under my head
 and his right hand embraces me.¹¹⁹
4. I bind you under oath
 daughters of Jerusalem
 why should you cause hatred
 or disturb [this] love
 while it still pleases?¹²⁰
5. Who is she that rises from the desert,
 clinging to her beloved?¹²¹
 beneath the apple tree I aroused you,¹²²
- א. מִי יִתְּנָהּ כָּאָח לִי
 יוֹנֵק שְׁדֵי אִמִּי
 אֶמְצֵאָה בַּחוּץ
 אֶשְׁקֶה
 גַּם לֹא-יִבְזֶוּ לִי:
 ב. אֶנְהִיגָהּ אֶבְיָאָהּ
 אֶל-בֵּית אִמִּי
 תִּלְמַדְנִי
 אֶשְׁקֶה מִיַּיִן הֶחָזֵק
 מִעֲסִיס רִמּוֹנִי:
 ג. שְׂמָאלוֹ תַּחַת רֹאשִׁי
 וְיָמִינוֹ תִּחְבֶּקֵנִי:
 ד. הִשְׁבַּעְתִּי אֲחֵכֶם
 בָּנוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם
 מַה-תְּעִירוּ |
 וּמַה-תַּעֲרֹרוּ אֶת-הָאַהֲבָה
 עַד-שֶׁתִּחַפֵּץ:
 ה. מִי זֹאת עֹלָה מִן-הַמִּדְבָּר
 מְתַרְפֶּקֶת עַל-דּוּדָהָ
 תַּחַת הַתְּפוֹחַ עֹרְרָתִיךָ

¹¹⁵ Israel pleads with God to rest His Presence upon them once again. Beseeching His Divine aid and comfort, she exclaims, "If only You would comfort me in my exile as Yoseif comforted his brothers though they sinned against him.—*Rashi*

¹¹⁶ When I would find Your prophets speaking in Your Name, I would embrace them, and they would not scorn me.—*Rashi*

¹¹⁷ I would ask You to return to the Temple and teach me as You taught Israel in the *Ohel Moed*, Tent of Assembly, during the years of the wilderness.—*Rashi*

¹¹⁸ This refers to the wine libations on the Altar.—*Rashi*

¹¹⁹ Israel now addresses the nations, saying: "Even though I complain and lament, my Beloved (God), is my support and comfort in my exile."—*Rashi*

¹²⁰ Your attempts to detract His love from me will be of no avail, for in time you will witness His love for me—when His Divine Presence will again rest upon me.—*Alshich*

¹²¹ This refers to Israel in the wilderness. She was elevated through the giving of the Torah and her clinging to the Divine Presence.—*Rashi*

¹²² This refers to Mount Sinai which was suspended over the Israelites like an apple. There she manifested her love for God.—*Rashi*

- there your mother had birth pains
there she who bore you suffered.
6. Set me as a seal upon your heart
as a seal upon your arm,¹²³
for love is as strong as death,¹²⁴
jealousy is as harsh as the grave;¹²⁵
its flashes are flashes of fire
from the flame of God.
7. Many waters
cannot quench the love,
and rivers cannot drown it;¹²⁶
if a man would give
all the wealth of his house for love
they would surely scorn him.¹²⁷
8. We have a little sister
but she has no bosom;¹²⁸
what shall we do for our sister
on the day she is spoken for?¹²⁹
9. If she be a wall
we will build upon her
a fortress of silver,¹³⁰
if she be a door,
we will enclose her
- שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָתְךָ אִמְךָ
שָׁמָּה חִבְּלָה יִלְדָּתְךָ:
ו. שִׁימֵנִי כַחוֹתָם עַל-לִבְךָ
כַחוֹתָם עַל-זְרוֹעֶךָ
כִּי-עֲזָה כַמּוֹת אֶהְיֶה
קָשָׁה כַשְׂאוֹל קִנְיָאָה
רִשְׁפֵּיהָ רִשְׁפֵּי אֵשׁ
שִׁלֶּהּ בְּתֵיבָה:
ז. מַיִם רַבִּים
לֹא יוּכְלוּ לִכְבּוֹת אֶת-הָאֶהְבָּה
וְנַהֲרוֹת לֹא יִשְׁטָפוּהָ
אִם-יִתֵּן אִישׁ
אֶת-כָּל-הוֹן בֵּיתוֹ בְּאַהֲבָה
בָּזוּ יִבְזוּ לוֹ:
ח. אֲחוֹת לָנוּ קְטָנָה
וְשָׁדִים אֵין לָהּ
מַה-נַּעֲשֶׂה לְאַחֲוָתָנוּ
בַּיּוֹם שִׁידְבָּר-בָּהּ:
ט. אִם-חוֹמָה הִיא
נִבְנֶה עָלֶיהָ
טִירַת כֶּסֶף
וְאִם-דֶּלֶת הִיא
נִצּוֹר עָלֶיהָ

¹²³ The nation of Israel asks that she never be forgotten by God.—*Rashi*

¹²⁴ Because of our great love for You that we are able to endure death for Your sake.—*Rashi*

¹²⁵ This refers to the jealousies of the nations because of our special relationship to God.—*Rashi*

¹²⁶ This refers to the attempts of the nations to force Israel to renounce her love of God.—*Rashi*

¹²⁷ Hearing these words of loyalty, God testifies that nothing would cause Israel to forsake her love for Him.—*Rashi*

¹²⁸ Israel in her exile is portrayed as a little sister. According to *Rashi*, 'she has no bosom' indicates that she is not yet ripe for redemption.

¹²⁹ How can we sustain her when the nations threaten her with destruction?—*Rashi*

¹³⁰ According to *Rashi*, this verse contains the Almighty's response. He answers, 'If Israel will be firm in her faith and be steadfast against assimilation with the nations, we will become a fortified city for her.'

with panels of cedar.¹³¹ לוח אָרז:
 10. I am a wall י. אָנִי חוֹמָה
 and my bosom is like towers; וְשָׁדַי כַּמְגְדָּלוֹת
 therefore I am in his eyes אֲנִי הָיִיתִי בְּעֵינָיו
 as one who found peace. כְּמוֹצֵאת שָׁלוֹם:
 11. Shlomo had a vineyard יא. כָּרֶם הָיָה לְשִׁלְמֹה
 in Baal Hamon,¹³² בְּבַעַל הָמוֹן
 he gave over the vineyard to caretakers;¹³³ נָתַן אֶת-הַכָּרֶם לְנֹטְרִים
 each of them brought for its fruit אִישׁ יָבֵא בְּפִרְיוֹ
 a thousand pieces of silver.¹³⁴ אֶלֶף כֶּסֶף:
 12. My vineyard is before me;¹³⁵ יב. כָּרְמִי שָׁלִי לִפְנֵי
 the thousand are yours, Shlomo, הָאֶלֶף לְךָ שִׁלְמֹה
 and two hundred וּמֵאתִים
 are for those who guard its fruit.¹³⁶ לְנֹטְרִים אֶת-פִּרְיוֹ:
 13. You who sit in the gardens, יג. הַיּוֹשֵׁבֶת בַּגְּזִיזִים
 companions listen to your voice,¹³⁷ חֲבֵרִים מְקַשְׁיָיִם לְקוֹלְךָ
 let me hear [your voice]. הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי:
 14. Flee my beloved יד. בָּרַח | דּוּדִי
 and be like a gazelle וְדָמָה לְךָ לְצִבִּי
 or a young hart¹³⁸ אֹי לְעַפְרַי הָאֵילִים
 upon the mountains of spices.¹³⁹ עַל הָרֵי הַבְּשָׂמִים:

¹³¹ But if she will be like a door which revolves on its hinges and opens whenever someone knocks indicating she is open to all their enticement, we will merely panel her doors which will be eaten away and leave her exposed.—*Rashi*

¹³² *שִׁלְמוֹ* is a reference to God. Who is described as *מֶלֶךְ שֶׁשָּׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹ*, King to Whom peace belongs. The verse is thus interpreted by *Rashi*: God had a vineyard (Israel) who dwelled in Jerusalem (a city of *הָמוֹן*, of multitudes).

¹³³ God gave over His people into the hands of harsh rulers:—Babylon, Greece, and Edom.

¹³⁴ They imposed exorbitant taxes and fines upon Israel.—*Rashi*

¹³⁵ "Despite that Israel was given into your hands, she remains Mine," says the Almighty.—*Rashi*

¹³⁶ The nations declare that they will return whatever they extorted from Israel, plus a penalty of an additional fifth.—*Rashi*

¹³⁷ God now addresses Israel: "You who are scattered in the exile, tending the gardens of others, and yet dwell in the synagogues and study-houses, the Heavenly Angels, (your companions) listen to your prayers and the sound of your Torah study."—*Rashi*

¹³⁸ Finally, Israel pleads with God to flee from this Exile and deliver her from it. (Our Sages relate that He has been with us in all our exiles.) She beseeches Him to hasten the redemption with the swiftness of a gazelle or a young hart.—*Rashi*

¹³⁹ This is a reference to the Holy Temple on Mount Moriah. May it be rebuilt speedily in our days. Amen.—*Rashi*

Preface to Koheles

The Book of Koheles was the subject of great debate by the Rabbis as to its worthiness to be included in the Holy Scriptures. The opinion of the School of Hillel prevailed and it was finally accepted because of the concluding thesis in the summing up of Koheles. "In conclusion, after all has been heard; fear God and preserve His commandments for this is the whole duty of man."

The Book of Koheles is a mixture of hope and despair, of darkness and light, of joy and sadness and of life and death. Solomon plays the role of an instructor, describing the two contrasting facets of life—the existence of good and evil, materialism and the spiritual grandeur of human life. He also depicts the alternating moods of man—his inclination to follow the vanities and the follies for the momentary pleasures they may bring and then the other mood of choosing the moral and the noble pursuits of Torah life. The Book reflects the constant friction between these two inclinations, in their battleground which is man himself.

The Festival of Sukkos is surely the most appropriate period of the year for the reading of Koheles which contains these contradictions. It is the Festival which occurs at a time of material abundance and at the same time it is a Festival of deep spiritual experience. The Jew sees himself surrounded with plenty and might imagine himself self-sufficient. Precisely at that moment he is summoned to the humble abode of the Sukkah and peering through the scant covering above him, gazes at the heavens and contemplates his dependence upon God.

It was natural that Hillel should have defended this book. He understood man's failings and realized that with all his shortcomings there was inherent good in every man. Koheles is the portrait of man who is perhaps the most inconsistent of God's creatures. The Festival of Sukkos is distinguished by its contrasting appeal and Kohells was rightly selected as the book which would best manifest this dual aspect of the Festival.

Kohes קהלת

Chapter I פרק א

1. The words of Kohes, the son of David,¹
king in Jerusalem.²

א. דברי קהלת בן-דוד
מלך בירושלם:
2. Vanity of vanities, said Kohes;
vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

ב. הבל הבלים אמר קהלת
הבל הבלים הבל הבל:
3. What profit does man have
for all his labor
which he labors beneath the sun.

ג. מה-יתרון לאדם
בכל-עמלו
ש-יעמל תחת השמש:
4. A generation passes away
and [another] generation comes,
and the earth abides forever.³

ד. דור הלך
ודור בא
והארץ לעולם עמדת:
5. The sun rises and the sun sets,
and to its place it strives.
to rise there [again].

ה. וזרח השמש ובא השמש
ואל-מקומו שואף
וזרח הוא שם:
6. It [the wind] goes toward the south,
and turns about toward the north;
round and round goes the wind,
and upon its circuits, the wind returns.

ו. הולך אל-דרום
וסובב אל-צפון
סובב | סבב הולך הרוח
ועל-סביבותיו שב הרוח:
7. All the rivers flow into the sea,
yet the sea is not full;
to the place where the rivers flow,
there they continue to flow.

ז. כל-הנחלים הלקים אל-הים
והים איננו מלא
אל-מקום שהנחלים הלקים
שם הם שבים ללכת:
8. All things lead to weariness,

ח. כל-הדברים יגעים

¹ Solomon was the spiritual heir of David, King of Israel, who experienced every facet of human life: its fears, its hopes, its victories and defeats. In his book, Solomon examines all these aspects of human life. He was a king and son of a king, a wise man, son of a wise man, and a righteous man, son of a righteous man.

² Solomon is known by three titles: 1) In Song of Songs 3:11 he is called "King Solomon." 2) In Proverbs 1:1 he is called "King of Israel" and 2) here he is called "King of Jerusalem." The Talmud (*Sanhedrin 20b*) comments that his kingdom was diminished by virtue of sin. At first he was recognized universally as King Solomon. After his sin he was King of Israel—his kingdom limited to the land of Israel, and then only King of Jerusalem.

³ The routine unchanging activity in the world does not inspire man with something new and fresh to satisfy his weary eyes and ears. (Akaidas Yitzchok)

- man cannot speak of them;
 the eye is not satisfied with seeing,
 nor the ear filled with hearing.
9. That which has been is what will be,
 and that which has been done
 is that which will be done;
 and there is nothing new under the sun.⁴
10. Sometimes there is a thing
 of which one will exclaim:
 "See this is new!";
 it has already been in existence
 in the ages which preceded us.
11. There is no remembrance
 of earlier generations;
 also of the later generations
 that are to come,
 there will be no remembrance of them
 among those who will come after.
12. I, Koheles, have been king
 over Israel in Jerusalem.
13. And I applied my heart
 to search and explore with wisdom,
 concerning all that happens
 beneath the heavens;
 it is an evil thing
 that God has given to mankind
 to be afflicted with.⁵
- לֹא-יִדְבַּק אִישׁ לְדָבָר
 לֹא-תִשְׂבַּע עֵין לְרֹאוֹת
 וְלֹא-תִמְלֵא אָזְן מִשְׁמָע:
 ט. מִה־שֶּׁהָיָה הוּא שֶׁיְהִי
 וּמִה־שֶּׁנַּעֲשָׂה
 הוּא שֶׁיַּעֲשֶׂה
 וְאֵין כֵּל-חֲדָשׁ תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ:
 י. יֵשׁ דָּבָר
 שִׁיאָמַר
 רְאֵה-זֶה חֲדָשׁ הוּא
 כִּכְרֵה הָיָה
 לְעָלָמִים אֲשֶׁר הָיָה מִלְפָּנָיו:
 יא. אֵין זְכוֹרֹן
 לְרֵאשִׁינִים
 וְגַם לְאַחֲרִינִים
 שֶׁיְהִיוּ
 לֹא-יִהְיֶה לָהֶם זְכוֹרֹן
 עִם שֶׁיְהִיוּ לְאַחֲרֵנָה:
 יב. אֲנִי קָהַלְתִּי הַיִּיְתִי מֶלֶךְ
 עַל-יִשְׂרָאֵל בִּירוּשָׁלַם:
 יג. וְנִתְחִי אֶת-לִבִּי
 לְדְרוֹשׁ וּלְתוֹר בִּחְכָמָה
 עַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר נֹעֲשֶׂה
 תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם
 הוּא | עֲנִין רָע
 נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְבִנְי הָאָדָם
 לְעֲנוּת בּוֹ:

⁴ Although some eras have produced technological advances, and we are often astonished at new discoveries, yet, Koheles exclaims, everything dates back to antiquity. Moreover, all the forces of nature were a part of Creation and God gave man the inquiring intellect to discover and make use of them. (Breuer)

⁵ Yet it all comes from God. Nothing happens by itself. Though evil is the source of man's unhappiness, it is also the spur that often causes man to seek the Almighty for help. The fear of evil in the form of punishment is what frequently disciplines man, and were it not for the fear of God, humanity would be devoid of all moral discipline.

14. I have seen all the deeds
that were done under the sun;
and, behold,
all is vanity and vexation of spirit.
15. That which is crooked,
cannot be made straight;
and that which is wanting,
cannot be counted.
16. I said to myself:
“Behold,
I have grown and increased in wisdom
over all who were before me
in Jerusalem;
and my heart has perceived
much wisdom and knowledge.”
17. And I applied my heart to know wisdom,
and to know madness and foolishness;⁶
I understood that this, too,
was vexation of the spirit.
18. For with much wisdom,
there is much vexation;
and he who increases knowledge
increases pain.

יד. רֵאִיתִי אֶת-כָּל-הַמַּעֲשִׂים
שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
וְהִנֵּה
הַכֹּל הֶבֶל וְרַעְיוֹת רוּחַ:
טו. מַעֲוָה
לֹא-יִיכָל לְחַקֵּן
וְחִסְרוֹן
לֹא-יִיכָל לְהַמְנוֹת:
טז. דִּבַּרְתִּי אֵינִי עִם-לִבִּי לֵאמֹר
אֲנִי הִנֵּה
הִגְדַּלְתִּי וְהוֹסַפְתִּי חִכְמָה
עַל כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-הָיָה לִפְנֵי
עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַם
וּלְבִי רָאָה
הִרְבֵּה חִכְמָה וְדַעַת:
יז. וְאֶתְּנָה לִבִּי לְדַעַת חִכְמָה
וְדַעַת הַלָּלוֹת וְשִׁקְלוֹת
יָדַעְתִּי שֶׁגַּם-זֶה
הוּא רַעְיוֹן רוּחַ:
יח. כִּי בְרַב חִכְמָה
רַב-כָּעֵס
וְיוֹסִיף דַּעַת
יוֹסִיף מִכָּאוֹב:

Chapter II פרק ב

1. I said to myself, “Come now,
I will try [the life of] joy,
and enjoy the good life”;
and behold, this too was vanity.

א. אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִבִּי לָכֶה-נָּא
אֲנִסְכָּה בְּשִׂמְחָה
וְאֶנְהֵא בְּטוֹב
וְהִנֵּה גַם-הוּא הֶבֶל:

⁶ Koheles even applied himself to understand madness and folly in his attempt to surmount the frustration and suffering in daily living.

2. Of laughter, I said, it is senseless;⁷ ולשחוק אמרתי מהולל
and of joy—what does it accomplish. ולשמחה מה־זו עשה:
3. I searched in my heart [for a way] תרתי בלבי
to pamper my flesh with wine; למשוך ביין את־בשרי
while my heart conducted itself with wisdom, ולפי נהג בחכמה
and to grasp foolishness, ולאחז בסכלות
until I could see which was best עד אשר־אדאָה אי־זו טוב
for men to do לבני האדם אשר יעשו
under the heavens תחת השמים
during the brief span of their lives. מספר ימי חיהם:
4. I made great works; ד. הגדלתי מעשי
I built houses for myself, בניתי לי בתים
I planted vineyards for myself. נטעתי לי כרמים:
5. I made gardens and orchards for myself; ה. עשיתי לי גנות ופרדסים
and planted in them, every kind of fruit tree. ונטעתי בהם עץ פל־פרי:
6. I made pools of water ו. עשיתי לי ברכות מים
from which to irrigate the forest, להשקות מהם יצר
growing with trees. צומח עצים:
7. I acquired men-servants and maid-servants, ז. קניתי עבדים ושפחות
and had servants born in my house;⁸ ובני־בית הִיה לי
also herds of cattle and sheep גם מקנה בקר וצאן
I possessed in greater quantity הרבה הִיה לי
than anyone who preceded me in Jerusalem. מכל שהיו לפני בירושלם:
8. I also amassed silver and gold, ח. פנסתי לי גם־כסף וזהב
and treasures of kings and provinces; וסגלתי מלכים והמדינות
I obtained singers and musical instruments, עשיתי לי שרים ושרות
and things that delight the people, ומענגות בני האדם
chests and chests of them. שדה ושדות:
9. I was great [in wealth], and surpassed ט. וגדלתי והוספתי

⁷ Our Sages read the word מהולל as מהולל, praiseworthy. They say that the joy and delight awaiting the righteous in the World to Come is indeed praiseworthy. (Shabbos 30b)

⁸ According to Ibn Ezra. According to *Mezudot*: caretakers of the house.

- all who preceded me in Jerusalem;
also my wisdom remained with me.
10. And whatever my eyes desired,
I did not deny them;
I withheld not my heart
from any joy,
for my heart rejoiced in all my labor;
and this was my portion [reward]
from all my labor.
11. Then I looked upon all my works
that my hands had done,
and on the labor I had performed;
and behold—
all was vanity and vexation of spirit
and there is no profit under the sun.⁹
12. I [then] turned my attention
to behold wisdom,
and madness and foolishness;
for of what value is the man
who would come after the king [to repeat]
that which has already been done [by him].¹⁰
13. Then I perceived that the advantage
of wisdom over foolishness,
was like that of light over darkness.
14. The wise man, his eyes are in his head,
but the fool walks in darkness;
but I also understood
that the same fate befalls both of them.
- מִכָּל שֶׁהָיָה לִפְנֵי בִירוּשָׁלַם
אֶף חִכְמָתִי עִמָּדָה לִי:
י. וְכָל אֲשֶׁר שְׁאַלְוּ עֵינַי
לֹא אֲצַלְתִּי מֵהֶם
לֹא-מִנְעָתִי אֶת-לִבִּי
מִכָּל-שִׂמְחָה
כִּי-לִבִּי שִׂמַּח מִכָּל-עֲמָלִי
וְזֶה-הָיָה חֶלְקִי
מִכָּל-עֲמָלִי:
יא. וּפְנִיתִי אֲנִי בְּכָל-מַעֲשֵׂי
שְׁעָשׂוֹ יָדַי
וּבְעָמַל שְׁעָמְלָתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת
וְהִנֵּה
הַכֹּל הִבָּל וְרַעְיוֹת רוּחַ
וְאֵין יִתְרוֹן תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
יב. וּפְנִיתִי אֲנִי
לְרֹאוֹת חִכְמָה
וְהוֹלָלוֹת וְסִכְלוֹת
כִּי | מַה הָאָדָם
שִׁיבוֹא אַחֲרַי הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶת אֲשֶׁר-כָּבַד עָשׂוֹהוּ:
יג. וּרְאִיתִי אֲנִי שֵׁשׁ יִתְרוֹן
לְחִכְמָה מִן-הַסִּכְלוֹת
כִּי יִתְרוֹן הָאֹר מִן-הַחֹשֶׁךְ:
יד. הַחֶכֶם עֵינָיו בְּרֹאשׁוֹ
וְהַפֶּסֶל בַּחֹשֶׁךְ הוֹלֵךְ
וְיָדַעְתִּי גַם-אֲנִי
שֶׁמִּקְרָה אֶחָד יִקְרָה אֶת-כֻּלָּם:

⁹ Koheles declares that all his wealth has not made him any happier and certainly has not brought greater meaning to life. Nothing of his material endeavors were capable of yielding lasting benefits in this world. (Metsudas Dovid)

¹⁰ Koheles states that it would not be worthwhile for anyone to experiment as he had. The king is best equipped to study the comparison between wisdom and folly based on his tremendous wealth and wisdom. There is no need for the ordinary man to repeat the experiment. (Ibn Ezra)

15. And I said in my heart: **טו. וְאִמָּרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִפְיִ**
 “Since the fate of the fool **בְּמִקְרָהּ הַפְסִילִ**
 will also be my fate, **גַּם־אֲנִי יִקְרָנִי**
 why do I seek to become wiser?” **וְלָמָּה חֲכַמְתִּי אֲנִי אֶזְיָר**
 Then I said in my heart: **וְדַבַּרְתִּי בְלִפְיִ**
 “This too is vanity.” **שְׁגִם־זֶה הַבָּל:**
16. For there is no remembrance **טז. כִּי אֵין זְכוֹרֻן**
 of either the wise man or the fool, forever;
 since in the days to come **לְחֻכְם עַם־הַפְסִיל לְעוֹלָם**
 all will be forgotten; **בְּשִׁכְכָּר הַיָּמִים הַבָּאִים**
 and how can the death of the wise man **הַכֹּל נִשְׁכַּח**
 be like [the death of] the fool? **וְאִיךָ יָמוּת הַחֲכָם**
עַם־הַפְסִיל:
17. And [so] I hated life,¹¹ **יז. וְשָׂנְאֹתִי אֶת־הַחַיִּים**
 for I was sorely grieved, **כִּי רַע עָלַי**
 by all that was done under the sun;
 for all is vanity and vexation of spirit. **הַמַּעֲשֶׂה שְׁנַעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ**
כִּי־הַכֹּל הַבָּל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ:
18. And I hated all my labor **יח. וְשָׂנְאֹתִי אֲנִי אֶת־כָּל־עֲמָלִי**
 in which I labored under the sun;
 for I must leave it to the man **שֶׁאֲנִי־חֹנֶה לְאָדָם**
 who will succeed me. **שִׁיִּהְיֶה אַחֲרָי:**
19. And who knows whether he will be **יט. וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ**
 a wise man or a fool?
 Yet he will rule over all my work **הַחֲכָם יִהְיֶה אֹי סָבֵל**
 in which I labored, **וְיִשְׁלֹט בְּכָל־עֲמָלִי**
 and have shown myself to be wise **שֶׁעָמַלְתִּי**
 under the sun; **וְשִׁחַכְמַתִּי**
 this, too, is vanity. **תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ**
גַּם־זֶה הַבָּל:
20. And [so] I turned my heart to despair **כ. וְסִבּוֹתִי אֲנִי לִיאֵשׁ אֶת־לִבִּי**
 of all the labor **עַל כָּל־הָעֲמָל**

¹¹ The *Targum* and *Rashi* explain that Solomon was disillusioned with life because he foresaw the evil that would follow his son Rehoboam's accession to the throne. He was aware that the kingdom he had established would become divided with only two tribes remaining loyal to his son.

- in which I labored under the sun. שְׁעַמְלִיתִי תַחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
21. For there is a man who labored כֹּא. כִּי־יֵשׁ אָדָם שֶׁעָמַל׃
with wisdom, knowledge and skill; בְּחָכְמָה וּבִדְעָה וּבְכִשְׁרוֹן
and [yet] to a man who has not labored, וְלֹאֲדָם שֶׁלֹּא עָמַל־בּוֹ
he shall leave it, as his portion; יִתְּנֶנּוּ חֶלְקוֹ
this, too, is vanity and a great evil. גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וְרָעָה רַבָּה:
22. For what has a man כֵּב. כִּי מַה־הָיָה לָאָדָם׃
of all his labor, בְּכָל־עֲמָלוֹ
and of the ambition of his heart, וּבִרְעִיּוֹן לִבּוֹ
for which he labors under the sun? שָׂהוּא עָמַל תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
23. For all his days are painful, כֹּג. כִּי כָל־יָמָיו מְכַאֲבִים
and aggravation is his lot, וְכַעַס עֲנִיָּו
even at night his heart has no rest; גַּם־בַּלַּיְלָה לֹא־שָׁכַב לִבּוֹ
this, too, is vanity. גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל הוּא:
24. Is it not beneficial for man כֵּד. אִין־טוֹב בְּאָדָם׃
that he eats and drinks, שִׂיאָכֵל וְשָׂתָה
and shows himself content with his labor?¹² וְהִרְאָה אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ טוֹב בְּעֲמָלוֹ
—this, too, I saw, גַּם־זֶה רָאִיתִי אֲנִי
that it is from the hand of God. כִּי מִיַּד הָאֱלֹהִים הִיא:
25. For who should eat כֹּה. כִּי מִי יֹאכֵל
and who should enjoy, if not I? וּמִי יַחֲוֹשׁ חֵוֶץ מִמֶּנִּי:
26. For to the man who is good in His sight, כו. כִּי לָאָדָם שְׂטוֹב לִפְנֵי
He gives wisdom, knowledge and joy; נָתַן חָכְמָה וְדַעַת וְשִׂמְחָה
but to the sinner, וְלַחֹטֵא
He gives the urge to gather and accumulate— נָתַן עֲנָזִן לְאַסֹּף וּלְכַנּוֹס
that he should [ultimately] hand it [on to him] לַחַת
who is good in the sight of God; לְטוֹב לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
this, too, is vanity and vexation of spirit. גַּם־זֶה הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ:

¹² Self-denial is alien to Koheles' philosophy. On the contrary, he declares that man should eat, drink, and enjoy life. Koheles *does* object to wealth and pleasure when they are ends in themselves. There must be higher values for which wealth and pleasure serve as means. Man's task is to be content with his wealth. The desire for more only diminishes or destroys the enjoyment of what one already possesses.

Chapter III פרק ג

1. For everything there is a season
and there is a time for everything
under the sun:
א. לְכָל זְמַן
וְעֵת לְכָל-חַפְצִי
תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם:
2. A time to be born and a time to die;
a time to plant,
and a time to uproot the planted.
ב. עֵת לֵלֶדֶת וְעֵת לָמוּת
עֵת לִטְעוֹת
וְעֵת לַעֲקוֹר נִטְוִיעַ:
3. A time to kill and a time to heal;
a time to wreck and a time to build.
ג. עֵת לְהָרוֹג וְעֵת לְרַפּוֹא
עֵת לִפְרוֹץ וְעֵת לִבְנוֹת:
4. A time to weep and a time to laugh;
a time to mourn and a time to dance.
ד. עֵת לִבְכוּת וְעֵת לִשְׂחֹק
עֵת סִפּוּד וְעֵת רִקּוּד:
5. A time to cast away stones,
and a time to gather stones;
a time to embrace,
and a time to refrain from embracing.
ה. עֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ אֲבָנִים
וְעֵת כְּנוֹס אֲבָנִים
עֵת לְחַבֹּק
וְעֵת לְרַחֵק מִחֻבָּק:
6. A time to seek and a time to abandon;
a time to preserve, and a time to discard.
ו. עֵת לִבְקֹשׁ וְעֵת לֵאמֹד
עֵת לְשָׁמֹר וְעֵת לְהַשְׁלִיךְ:
7. A time to rip apart and a time to sew;
a time to be silent and a time to speak.
ז. עֵת לִקְרוֹעַ וְעֵת לְחַפּוֹר
עֵת לִחְשׁוֹת וְעֵת לְדַבֵּר:
8. A time to love and a time to hate;
a time for war and a time for peace.
ח. עֵת לָאֱהָב וְעֵת לְשׂוֹא
עֵת מִלְחָמָה וְעֵת שְׁלוֹם:
9. What benefit [then]
has the worker from his labor?
ט. מַה-יִּתְרוֹן
הַעוֹשֶׂה בָּאֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹמֵל:
10. I have seen the matter
which God has given to man
to be afflicted with.
י. רָאִיתִי אֶת-הָעֲנָן
אֲשֶׁר נָתַן אֱלֹהִים לְבְנֵי הָאָדָם
לְעֲנוֹת בּוֹ:
11. He has made everything beautiful in its time;
even [a sense of] the external world,
He has set in their heart,
yet man cannot discover
the work
that God has done
from [the] beginning to the end.
יא. אֶת-הַכֹּל עָשָׂה יָפָה בְּעִתּוֹ
גַּם אֶת-הָעֹלָם
נָתַן בְּלִבָּם
מִבְּלִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִמְצָא הָאָדָם
אֶת-הַמַּעֲשֶׂה
אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים
מִרֵּאשִׁית וְעַד-סוֹף:

12. I know there is nothing better for them
than to rejoice
and perform good deeds in his life.
13. And also, when every man eats and drinks,
and enjoys the good of all his labors,
that is the gift of God.
14. I know
that whatever God does
will endure forever,
nothing can be added to it,
nor anything be diminished from it;
God has so made it
that man should fear before Him.
15. That which already was, exists now,
and that which is to be, has already been;
and God seeks the pursued.¹³
16. And, furthermore, I have seen under the sun:
in the place of justice there was wickedness,
and in the place of righteousness
there was wickedness.¹⁴
17. I said in my heart:
"The righteous and the wicked
God will judge;
for there is a time for every desire,
- יב. ידעתי כי אין טוב בהם
כי אם-לשמח
ולעשות טוב בתו:
יג. וגם כל-האדם שיאכל ושתה
וראה טוב בכל-עמלו
מתת אלהים היא:
יד. ידעתי
כי כל-אשר יעשה האלהים
הוא יהיה לעולם
עליו אין להוסיף
וממנו אין לגרוע
והאלהים עשה
שיראו מלפניו:
טו. מה-שהיה כבר הוא
נאשר להיות כבר היה
והאלהים יבקש את-נרדף:
טז. ועוד ראיתי תחת השמש
מקום המשפט שמה הרשע
ומקום הצדק
שמה הרשע:
יז. אמרתי אני בלבי
את-הצדיק ואת-הרשע
ישפט האלהים
כי-עת לכל-חפץ

¹³ The Midrash lists some examples of God saving the pursued: Noah was persecuted and ridiculed by his contemporaries but God rescued him and called him "righteous." Abraham was persecuted by his contemporaries, but God selected him to be the father of his people. Isaac was persecuted by the Philistines, but God caused him to become rich and powerful so that they sought to make a treaty with him. Joseph was hated by his brothers, but he gained Divine favor. Moses was pursued by Pharaoh but God elected him to become the leader of the Jewish people. David was obliged to flee from Saul, but God appointed him to be His servant and establish a dynasty.

¹⁴ Koheles refers to justice and righteousness based only on man's intelligence and moral/ethical concepts, that dictate the logic of, and mutual benefit for, man and his neighbor to refrain from exploiting one another. Unfortunately, declares Koheles, logic is not enough. For history has shown that even in the place of justice and righteousness one finds evil. Those who were appointed by man to administer the legal code are often tainted with wickedness and greed. Where there is no fear of God, there is certainly no fear of man.

and for every deed—there.”¹⁵ וְעַל כָּל־הַמַּעֲשֵׂה שָׁם:
 18. I said in my heart: יח. אָמַרְתִּי אֲנִי בְלִפְי
 “Concerning the state of man, עַל־דִּבְרֵת בְּנֵי הָאָדָם
 God has set them apart¹⁶ לְבָרָם הָאֱלֹהִים
 that they may see וְלִרְאוֹת
 that they themselves are as beast.” שֶׁהֵם־בְּהֵמָה הִמָּה לָהֶם:
 19. For the fate of men יט. כִּי מִקְרָה בְּנֵי־הָאָדָם
 and the fate of the beasts— וּמִקְרָה הַבְּהֵמָה
 the same fate befalls both, וּמִקְרָה אֶחָד לָהֶם
 as one dies, so dies the other, כָּמוֹת זֶה בֶּן מוֹת זֶה
 the same breath is in all of them; וְרוּחַ אֶחָד לְכָל
 and the superiority of man over the beast וּמוֹתֵר הָאָדָם מִן־הַבְּהֵמָה
 is nil אֵין
 for all is vanity. כִּי הִפֹּל הֶבֶל:
 20. All go to one place;¹⁷ כ. הִפֹּל הוֹלֵךְ אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד
 all come from the dust, הִפֹּל הָיָה מִן־הָעֹפָר
 and all return to the dust. וְהִפֹּל שָׁב אֶל־הָעֹפָר:
 21. Who knows the spirit of man, כא. מִי יוֹדֵעַ רוּחַ בְּנֵי הָאָדָם
 whether it rises upwards הָעֹלָה הִיא לְמַעְלָה
 and the spirit of the beast וְרוּחַ הַבְּהֵמָה
 whether it descends to the earth.”¹⁸ הֵיכָדָת הִיא לְמַטָּה לָאָרֶץ:
 22. I perceived, therefore, כב. וַרְאִיתִי
 that there is nothing better כִּי אֵין טוֹב
 than man should rejoice in his work, מֵאֲשֶׁר יִשְׂמַח הָאָדָם בְּמַעֲשָׁיו
 for that is his lot; כִּי־הוּא חֶלְקוֹ

¹⁵ According to *Ibn Ezra*, “there” refers to the reward and punishment in the World to Come. Man can do what he pleases in his life in this world, but in the hereafter there will be a day of judgement. (*Midrash*)

¹⁶ Others understand the word “לָבָרָם” to mean “test.” Koheles says that God wishes to test the sons of man, to see if they will use the freedom of will which He gave them. For this reason, there is no reward or punishment in this world, God wanted to give man every opportunity to exercise his freedom of will without the influence of immediate reward or punishment. Because of this some people see no difference between man and beast for they claim that God allows the wicked to prosper.

¹⁷ They ask: “Then why try to live on a higher level than the beast?”

¹⁸ This might be interpreted as a cynical question by the materialists who claim there is no higher spirit in man. If there is no God, man could not have been created in the image of God.

for who will bring him to see כִּי מִי יביאנוּ לְרֹאוֹת
what will be after him. בְּמָה שִׁיהִיָּה אַחֲרָיו:

Chapter IV פֶּרֶק ד

1. And I returned א. וּשְׁבַתִּי אֲנִי
and considered all the oppressions וְאָרָאָה אֶת-כָּל-הָעֲשָׁקִים
that are committed under the sun; אֲשֶׁר גַּעֲשִׂים תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
and behold, tears of the oppressed, וְהִנֵּה | דְּמַעַת הָעֲשָׁקִים
with no one to comfort them, וְאֵין לָהֶם מְנַחֵם
and from the hand of their oppressors וּמִיַּד עֹשְׂקֵיהֶם
[flows the] power— כֹּחַ
with no one to comfort them.¹⁹ וְאֵין לָהֶם מְנַחֵם:
2. And so I praised the dead ב. וּשְׁבַחְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת-הַמֵּתִים
who already died; שֶׁכָּבְדוּ מֵתוֹ
more than the living מִן-הַחַיִּים
who are still alive. אֲשֶׁר הֵמָּה חַיִּים עֲדָנָה:
3. And better than both of these ג. וְטוֹב מִשְׁנֵיהֶם
is he who has not yet been born; אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עַדֵּן לֹא הָיָה
who has not seen אֲשֶׁר לֹא-רָאָה
the evil deed אֶת-הַמַּעֲשֵׂה הָרָע
that is committed under the sun. אֲשֶׁר גַּעֲשָׂה תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
4. And I observed that all labor ד. וְרָאִיתִי אֲנִי אֶת-כָּל-עֵמָל
and all skillful work וְאֶת-כָּל-כְּשָׁרוֹן הַמַּעֲשֵׂה
is the result of man's envy כִּי הִיא קִנְאָת-אִישׁ
of his neighbor; מִרְעָהוּ
this, too, is vanity and vexation of spirit: גַּם-זֶה הֶבֶל וְרַעְיוֹת רוּחַ:
5. The fool folds his hands ה. הַפֶּסֶל חִבַּק אֶת-יָדָיו
and eats his own flesh.²⁰ וְאָכַל אֶת-בִּשְׂרָוֹ:

¹⁹ According to *Ibn Ezra*, this phrase is repeated to emphasize the sorry plight of the downtrodden. Even under the most inhuman oppression no one cares enough to comfort them.

²⁰ The indolent person who sits with his hands folded and performs no work for his own livelihood will eventually die of starvation. (*Ibn Ezra*)

6. Better is a handful [earned] in contentment;
than two handfuls [earned]
in labor and vexation of spirit.
7. And I returned and observed
[another form of] vanity under the sun.
8. There is one who is alone,
with none other beside him,
he has neither son nor brother;
yet there is no end to his labor,
neither is his eye
ever satisfied with riches;²¹
[nor does he ask himself]
For whom do I labor
and deprive myself of goodness?
this too is vanity, and an evil matter.
9. Two are better than one;
because
they receive a goodly reward for their work.
10. For if they fall,
one will lift up the other;
but woe to him who is alone when he falls,
and there is no one to lift him.
11. Also, if two lie together
they can be warm;
but how can one be warm alone?
12. And if an individual attacks,
the two of them can stand against him;
and the threefold cord
is not quickly severed.²²
- ו. טוֹב מִלֵּא כֶּהֱנִיחַ
מִמֶּלֶא חֲפִנִים
עֲמַל וִרְעוּת רוּחַ:
ז. וְשָׁבֹתִי אֲנִי וְאָרָאָה
הַכֵּל תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
ח. יֵשׁ אֶחָד
וְאֵין שֹׁנֵי
גַם בֶּן וְאָח אֵין-לּוֹ
וְאֵין קוֹץ לְכָל-עֲמָלוֹ
גַם-עֵינּוֹ
לֹא-תִשְׂבַּע עֶשֶׂר
וְלִמִּי אֲנִי עֲמַל
וּמִחֲסֹר אֶת-נַפְשִׁי מִטוֹבָה
גַם-זֶה הֶכֶל וְעֵגֶל רָע הוּא:
ט. טוֹבִים הַשְּׁנָיִם מִן-הָאֶחָד
אֲשֶׁר
יֵשׁ-לָהֶם שְׂכָר טוֹב בְּעֲמָלָם:
י. כִּי אִם-יִפְּלוּ
הָאֶחָד יָקִים אֶת-חֲבֵרוֹ
וְאֵילוּ הָאֶחָד שִׁיפֹל
וְאֵין שֹׁנֵי לְהִקְיָמוֹ:
יא. גַּם אִם-יִשְׁכְּבוּ שְׁנָיִם
וְתָם לָהֶם
וְלֹא אֶחָד אֵין יָחַם:
יב. וְאִם-יִתְקַפֵּל הָאֶחָד
הַשְּׁנָיִם יַעֲמִדּוּ נִגְדָּו
וְהַחוּט הַמִּשְׁלָשׁ
לֹא כִמְהֵרָה יִנְתָּק:

²¹ This person is never satisfied with his lot even when blessed with riches.

²² If two friends working together have such advantages, imagine how much greater is the benefit when three work together.

13. Better a poor but wise child;
than an old and foolish king,
who no longer knows
how to be vigilant.
14. Even though he [the child]
emerged from prison to be king;
even though in his own kingdom
he was born a pauper.
15. I observed that all the living
that walk under the sun
were supportive of the young successor
who stepped into his place.
16. There was no limit to all the peoples,
to all of them whom he lead;²³
even though [it is so now]
those who come after [the next generation]
will not rejoice in him;
for this, too, is vanity
and vexation of spirit.
17. Guard your foot
when you go to the House of God;²⁴
come near and listen
rather than offer sacrifices like the fools;²⁵
for they do not know
that they do evil.
- יג. טוב ילד מסכן ונחכם
ממלך זקן וקטיל
אשר לא ידע
להזהר עוד:
- יד. כי
מבית הסורים יצא למלך
כי גם במלכותו
נולד רש:
- טו. ראיתי את כל החיים
המהלכים תחת השמש
עם הילד השני
אשר יעמד תחתיו:
- טז. אין גוף לכל העם
לכל אשר יהיה לפניו
גם
האחרונים
לא ישמחו בו
כי גם זה הבל
ורעיון רוח:
- יז. שמור רגלך
כאשר תלך אל בית האלהים
וקרוב לשמע
מתת הקסילים וזבח
כי אינם יודעים
לעשות רע:

²³ He governed so well that all acknowledged his excellent leadership.

²⁴ According to *Metsudas Dovid*, Koheles declares: "Watch your step so that you will not have to go to the House of God." He admonishes the people to avoid the obligation to go to the Temple with a sin-offering. It is better not to sin than to seek atonement with an offering.

²⁵ The fools think that the Almighty delights in their sin-offerings. They don't consider that they do evil by sinning and then bringing sacrifices to atone for their transgressions. (*Ralbag*)

Chapter V פרקה

1. Do not be impulsive with your mouth,
nor let your heart be hasty
to utter a word before God;²⁶
for God is in heaven
and you are on earth,
therefore, let your words be few.
2. For a dream comes with many subjects
and the voice of a fool with many words.
3. When you make an oath to God,
do not delay in its fulfillment,
for He has no desire in fools;
whatever you vow, fulfill.
4. It is better that you not vow [at all]
rather than vow and not fulfill.
5. Do not permit your mouth
to bring guilt on your flesh,²⁷
nor say before the angel
that it was an error;
why should God be angered by your voice,
and destroy the work of your hands.
6. For in the multitude of dreams and vanities
and in the multitude of words;
man should fear God.²⁸
7. Oppression of the poor,
perverting of justice and righteousness—
should you observe these in the state—
do not be astonished by the fact;

א. אל־תִּבְהֹל עַל־פִּיךָ
וְלִבְךָ אֶל־יְמִינְךָ
לְהוֹצִיא דָּבָר לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם
וְאַתָּה עַל־הָאָרֶץ
עַל־כֵּן יִהְיוּ דְבָרֶיךָ מְעֻטִּים:
ב. כִּי בְּאֵל הַחֲלוֹם בָּרַב עֲנִיָּן
וְקוֹל כְּסִיל בָּרַב דְּבָרִים:
ג. בְּאִשְׁרֵי תִדְּר לַאֲלֹהִים
אַל־תִּתְאַחֵר לְשִׁלְמוֹ
כִּי אֵין חֲפֶץ בְּכִסְיָלִים
אֶת־אִשְׁרֵי תִדְּר שְׁלָם:
ד. טוֹב אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִדְּר
מִשְׁתִּדְּר וְלֹא תִשְׁלָם:
ה. אַל־תַּתֵּן אֶת־פִּיךָ
לְחַטִּיא אֶת־בְּשָׁרְךָ
וְאַל־תִּתְאַמַּר לִפְנֵי מַלְאָךְ
כִּי שָׁגָגָה הִיא
לָמָּה יִקְצֹף הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־קוֹלְךָ
וְיַחַבֵּל אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֶיךָ:
ו. כִּי בָרַב חֲלוֹמוֹת וְהִבָּלִים
וּדְבָרִים הַרְבֵּה
כִּי אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרָא:
ז. אִם־עֲשָׂךְ־שׁ
וְגִזַּל מִשְׁפָּט וְצִדִּיק
תִּרְאֶה בְּמַדִּינָה
אַל־תִּתְחַמֵּה עַל־הַחֲפֶץ

²⁶ Don't be hasty to speak critically of God. (*Rashi*)

²⁷ When your mouth utters empty vows and promises it brings sin and punishment upon your entire person. (*Ibn Ezra*)

²⁸ In the multitude of words that man speaks each day of his life, it is important that man fear God. The temptation to speak evil is so great that only the fear of God can restrain him.

- for *One* higher than the high watches,
and there are high ones above them.²⁹
- ח. 8. The profit of the earth is desired by all;
the king himself is subject to the soil.
- ט. 9. He who loves money
will never be satisfied with money,
and he who loves abundance
will have no produce;
this too is vanity.
- י. 10. As goods increase
so do those who consume them;
and what advantage has the owner
except beholding them with his eyes.
- יא. 11. Sweet is the sleep of the laborer,
whether he eats little or much;
but the satiety of the rich
will not permit him to sleep.³⁰
- יב. 12. There is a sickening evil
[which] I have seen under the sun—
wealth preserved by its owner
to his own detriment.
- יג. 13. And should he lose that wealth
through some tragic mishap;
and should a son be born to him—
he will have nothing in his hand.³¹
- יד. 14. As he came from his mother's womb,
naked will he return as he came;
he will take nothing for his labor,
- כִּי גִבֹהַּ מֵעַל גִּבֹהַּ שֹׁמֵר
וּגְבוּהִים עֲלֵיהֶם:
וְיִתְרוֹן אֶרֶץ כָּפֹל הִוא
מֶלֶךְ לְשֹׂדֵה גִּבְעָד:
ט. אֹהֵב פֶּסֶק
לֹא יִשְׂבַּע פֶּסֶק
וּמִי־אֹהֵב בְּהֻמָּן
לֹא תְבוּאָה
גַּם־זֶה הִקְבִּל:
י. בְּרִבּוֹת הַטּוֹבָה
רַבּוֹ אוֹכְלֶיהָ
וּמַה־פֶּשְׁרוֹן לְבָעֲלֶיהָ
כִּי אִם־רְאִיתִי עֵינָיו:
יא. מְתוֹקָה שְׁנַת הָעֵבֶד
אִם־מַעֲט וְאִם־הִרְבֵּה יֹאכֵל
וְהַשְׂבַּע לְעֹשִׂיר
אֵינָנו מְנִיחִים לוֹ לִישׁוֹן:
יב. יִשְׁרָעָה חוֹלָה
רְאִיתִי תַחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
עֹשֶׂה שְׁמֹר לְבָעֲלָיו
לְרַעְתּוֹ:
יג. וְאֵבֶד הָעֵשֶׂר הִהוּא
כְּעִנְיָן רָע
וְהוֹלִיד בֶּן
וְאֵין בְּיָדוֹ מְאוּמָה:
יד. כְּאִשֶּׁר יֵצֵא מִבֶּטֶן אִמּוֹ
עָרוֹם יָשׁוּב לְלֶכֶת כְּשֶׁבָא
וּמִאוּמָה לֹא־יִשָּׂא בְּעַמְלּוֹ

²⁹ This refers to the angels who are above the oppressors. They are appointed by God to punish the oppressors. (Rashi)

³⁰ This concept is stated in Pirkei Avos 2:7: "the more possessions one has the more worry he has."

³¹ The father will have nothing to bequeath to his son. The rationale that he toiled in order to provide an inheritance for his children will be meaningless when his riches are gone.

- [nothing] that he will carry in his hand. טו. וְגַם-זֶה רָעָה חוֹלָה
 15. This too is a sickening evil; כָּל-עֲמַת שְׂבָא בֶן-יֶלֶד
 as he came, so shall he depart; וְמַה-יִּתְּרוֹן לוֹ
 what profit did he gain שְׂעִימָל לְרוּחַ
 that he toiled for the wind. טז. גַּם כָּל-יָמָיו בְּחֹשֶׁךְ יֹאכֵל
 16. Also, all his days he eats in darkness; וְכַעַס הָרֶבֶה וְחֵלִי וְקָצָף;
 and he has much grief, illness and anger. יז. הִנֵּה אֲשֶׁר-רָאִיתִי אָנִי
 17. Behold that which I have seen: טוֹב אֲשֶׁר-יִפָּה
 it is good, even commendable לֶאֱכֹל לְשִׂתּוֹת
 for one to eat and drink וְלִרְאוֹת טוֹבָה בְּכָל-עֲמָלוֹ
 and to enjoy the good of all his labor שְׂעִימָל תַּחַת-הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
 that he labors under the sun, מִסָּפֵר יְמֵי-חַיָּיו
 during the counted days of his life אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים
 that God has given him כִּי-הוּא חֶלְקוֹ;
 for that is his portion. יח. גַּם כָּל-הָאָדָם
 18. Also, every man אֲשֶׁר נָתַן-לוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים
 to whom God has given עֹשֶׁר וְנִכְסִים
 wealth and possession, וְהַשְׁלִיטוֹ לֶאֱכֹל מִמֶּנּוּ
 and the power to enjoy them, וְלִשְׂאֹת אֶת-חֶלְקוֹ
 to take his share וְלִשְׂמֹחַ בְּעֲמָלוֹ
 and to rejoice in his labor; זֶה מַתַּת אֱלֹהִים הִיא;
 this is the gift of God. יט. כִּי לֹא הָרֶבֶה
 19. For they are not many, יִזְכֹּר אֶת-יְמֵי חַיָּיו
 let him remember, the days of his life;³² כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים מַעֲנֶה
 while God answers [provides] him בְּשִׂמְחַת לִבּוֹ;
 with the joy of his heart.

Chapter VI פֶּרֶק ו

1. There is an evil which I have seen א. יֵשׁ רָעָה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי
 under the sun; תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ

³² I.e., let him remember that the days of his life are not many (*Metsudos*).

- and it weighs heavily on man. וְרָבָה הִיא עַל-הָאָדָם:
2. A man to whom God grants
wealth, possessions and honor,
and lacks nothing for himself
of all he desires,
yet God does not give him the power
to eat thereof
but instead a stranger will enjoy them;
this is vanity and an evil disease. ב. אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִתֵּן-לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים
עֲשָׂרוֹ וְנִכְסָיו וְכָבוֹד
וְאֵין לוֹ חֲסָר לְנַפְשׁוֹ
מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר-יִתְּאוֹ
וְלֹא-יִשְׁלִיטֵנוּ הָאֱלֹהִים
לֶאֱכֹל מִמֶּנּוּ
כִּי אִישׁ נִכְרִי יֵאָכְלוּ
וְהָהֵבֶל וְחַלְיָרָע הוּא:
3. If a man begets a hundred [children],
and lives many years,
so that the days of his years are many,
and his soul is not sated of goodness,
and moreover he has no burial;³³
I say, that better off than he,
is the stillborn child. ג. אִם-יֵלֵיד אִישׁ מֵאָה
וְשָׁנִים רַבּוֹת יִחְיֶה
וְרַב אֲשִׁיהוּ יִמִּי-שָׁנָיו
וְנַפְשׁוֹ לֹא-תִשְׂבַּע מִן-הַטּוֹבָה
וְגַם-קְבֻרָה לֹא-הָיְתָה לוֹ
אָמַרְתִּי טוֹב מִמֶּנּוּ
הַנֶּפֶל:
4. For he [the stillborn child] comes in vain
and departs in darkness;
and its name shrouded in darkness. ד. כִּי-בִהְבֵּל בָּא
וּבְחֹשֶׁךְ יֵלֵךְ
וּבְחֹשֶׁךְ שָׁמוֹ יִכְסֶה:
5. Though it never saw the sun,
nor knew of it;
its contentment is greater than his. ה. גַּם-שֶׁמֶשׁ לֹא-רָאָה
וְלֹא יָדָע
גִּחַת לְזֶה מִזֶּה:
6. Though he live a thousand years
twice over,
and enjoy no goodness;
indeed, to one place,
they all go. ו. וְאִלּוּ חִיָּה אֶלֶף שָׁנִים
פַּעַמַּיִם
וְטוֹבָה לֹא-רָאָה
הֲלֹא אֶל-מְקוֹם אֶחָד
הִכָּל הוֹלֵךְ:
7. All man's labor is to fill his mouth;
yet his appetite is never filled. ז. כָּל-עֲמַל הָאָדָם לִפִּיהוּ
וְגַם-הַנֶּפֶשׁ לֹא תִמָּלֵא:
8. What advantage has the wise man
over the fool? ח. כִּי מַה-יֹּתֵר לַחֲכָם
מִן-הַכָּסִיל

³³ Not only did he not enjoy his life but he was denied the final human dignity of burial.

- What disadvantage has the poor man
who knows how to cope
with [the problems of] life?
9. Better is what the eyes actually see,
than the imagination of the soul;
this too is vanity and vexation of spirit.
10. Whatever has been has already been named,
and it is foreknown what man is;
he cannot contend
with one who is mightier than he.³⁴
11. For there are many things
that increase vanity;
in what way is man better for it?
12. For who knows
what is good for man in [his] life,
in the counted days of his vanity,
which he spends as a [mere] shadow;
for who can tell a man
what will be after him under the sun.

מה-לְעָנִי
יֹדֵעַ לְהִלָּךְ
נֶגְדַת הַחַיִּים:
ט. טוֹב מִרְאֵה עֵינַיִם
מִהֲלֹךְ-נֶפֶשׁ
גַּם-זֶה הֶבֶל וּרְעוּת רוּחַ:
י. מִה-שֶׁהָיָה כְּכֹר נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ
וְנוֹדָע אֲשֶׁר-הוּא אָדָם
וְלֹא-יִוָּכַל לְדִין
עִם שְׂתַקְיָף מִמֶּנּוּ:
יא. כִּי יִשְׁדֹּכְרִים הָרַבָּה
מִרְבִּים הֶבֶל
מִה-יִתֵּר לָאָדָם:
יב. כִּי מִי-יֹדֵעַ
מִה-טוֹב לָאָדָם בְּחַיִּים
מִסֻּפֵּר יְמֵי-חַיֵּי הֶבֶלּוֹ
וַיַּעֲשֶׂם כָּצֵל
אֲשֶׁר מִי-יֵגִיד לָאָדָם
מִה-יְהִיֶּה אַחֲרָיו תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:

Chapter VII

פרק ז

1. Better a good name than precious oil;
and the day of death
than the day of birth.
2. Better to go to a house of mourning
than to a house of feasting,
for that is the end of all men;
and the living should take it to heart.
3. Better vexation than levity;
for through a grieved countenance,
the heart is made better.

א. טוֹב שֵׁם מְשֻׁמֵּן טוֹב
וַיּוֹם הַמָּוֶת
מִיּוֹם הַיּוֹלָדוֹ:
ב. טוֹב לָלֶכֶת אֶל-בֵּית-אֲבֵל
מִלָּכֶת אֶל-בֵּית מִשְׁתֶּה
בְּאֲשֶׁר הוּא סוֹף כָּל-הָאָדָם
וְהַחַיִּי יִתֵּן אֶל-לְבוֹ:
ג. טוֹב כָּעֵס מִשְׂחֹק
כִּי-דָרַע פָּנִים
יֵיטֵב לֵב:

³⁴ This refers to the angel of death. (*Rashi*)

4. The heart of the wise ד. לִב חֲכָמִים
[reflect on] the house of mourning; בְּבֵית אֲבֵל
but the heart of the fools וְלִב כְּסִילִים
[are attracted] to the house of feasting. בְּבֵית שִׂמְחָה:
5. Better to hear the rebuke of the wise ה. טוֹב לִשְׁמוֹעַ גְּעֵרַת חֲכָם
than for man to hear the song of fools. מֵאִישׁ שִׁמְעַ שִׁיר כְּסִילִים:
6. For like the crackling of thorns ו. כִּי קוֹל הַסִּירִים
under a pot, תַּחַת הַסִּיר
so is the laughter of the fool;³⁵ כֵּן שִׁחַק הַכְּסִיל
this too is vanity. וְגַם־זֶה הֶבֶל:
7. For quarreling makes the wise foolish,³⁶ ז. כִּי הָעֶשְׂק יְהוֹלֵל חֲכָם
and a gift corrupts the heart. וְיֹאבֵד אֶת־לֵב מִתְּנָה:
8. Better is the end of a matter ח. טוֹב אַחֲרִית דָּבָר
than its beginning; מִרְאשִׁיתוֹ
better is patience than pride. טוֹב אַרְךְ־רוּחַ מִגְּבַהּ רוּחַ:
9. Do not quicken your spirit to anger; ט. אַל־תִּבְהַל בְּרוּחְךָ לִכְעוֹס
for anger rests in the bosom of fools. כִּי לַעַס בָּחִיק כְּסִילִים יָנוּחַ:
10. Do not say: י. אַל־תֹּאמַר
was it that the former days מָה הָיָה שֶׁהַיָּמִים הָרִאשׁוֹנִים
were better than these? הָיוּ טוֹבִים מֵאֵלֶּה
for it is not out of wisdom כִּי לֹא מִחֲכָמָה
that you ask this question.³⁷ שֶׁאַלְתָּ עַל־זֶה:
11. It is good to have wisdom with inheritance; יא. טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה עִם־נַחֲלָה
and [such wisdom] benefits וַיִּתֵּר
those who see the sun [i.e. mankind]. לְרֹאֵי הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
12. For wisdom shelters יב. כִּי בָצַל הַחֲכָמָה
[as well] as money shelters; בָּצַל הַכֶּסֶף
but the advantage of knowledge וַיִּתְרוֹן דַּעַת

³⁵ The crackling of thorns in the fire lasts only a brief moment and then it is gone. So, too, the laughter and revelry of fools has no useful purpose or lasting value. (*Alshich*)

³⁶ Quarreling with wicked fools provokes the wise man and causes his wisdom to depart. Because of the taunts of Dathan and Aviram (Exodus 5:21) Moses was moved to provoke the Almighty (Exodus 5:23). (*Rashi*)

³⁷ This question is motivated by emotion rather than by rational study of past and present conditions. Wisdom would have led the individual to confront his problems and overcome them.

is that wisdom preserves the life	הַחֲכָמָה תְּחַיֶּה
of him who possesses it.	בְּעֲלֶיהָ:
13. Consider the deeds of God;	יג. רְאֵה אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים
for who [else] can straighten	כִּי מִי יוּכַל לְסַלֵּן
that which he [man] made crooked. ³⁸	אֶת־אֲשֶׁר עָוְתוּ:
14. On a day of goodness [prosperity]	יד. בְּיוֹם טוֹבָה
be in good spirits,	הִיָּה בְּטוֹב
and a day of adversity reflect [that]:	וּבְיוֹם רָעָה רְאֵה
the one was set up against the other	גַּם אֶת־זֶה לְעִמְתּוֹ
by God, in order	עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים עַל־דְּבָרָת
that man should not find	שׁוּא יִמְצָא הָאָדָם
anything after him.	אַחֲרָיו מְאִימָה:
15. I have seen all things	טו. אֶת־הַכֹּל רָאִיתִי
in the days of my vanity,	בְּיָמֵי הַבְּלִי
there is a righteous man	יֵשׁ צַדִּיק
who perishes [despite] his righteousness,	אֲבָד בְּצַדִּיקוֹ
and there is a wicked man	וְיֵשׁ רָשָׁע
whose life is prolonged	מְאֵרֵךְ
[despite] his wickedness.	בְּרָעוּתוֹ:
16. Be not exceedingly righteous	טז. אַל־תְּהִי צַדִּיק הַרְבֵּה
nor overly wise;	וְאַל־תַּחֲתַכֶּם יוֹתֵר
why destroy yourself.	לְמַה תִּשְׁוֹמֵם:
17. Be not excessively wicked, ³⁹	יז. אַל־תִּרְשָׁע הַרְבֵּה
and don't be a fool;	וְאַל־תְּהִי סָקָל
why should you die before your time.	לְמַה תָּמוּת בְּלֹא עֵתָּה:
18. It is best to take hold of one, ⁴⁰	יח. טוֹב אֲשֶׁר תִּתְּחַזַּק בְּזֶה

³⁸ And despite this, God extends to him, even when he is immersed in sin, the opportunity to straighten that which he made crooked. He need only reflect and repent and God gives him a chance to begin all over again with a fresh, clean slate.

³⁹ In *Mesechet Shabbos* 31b, Ulla asks: "Is one permitted to be slightly wicked?" He explains that if one indulges in a little wickedness he should not add to it. For example, if a person has eaten garlic and his unpleasant breath reaches his fellow, should he then eat more garlic and intensify the offensive odor? Similarly, one who has sinned should not lose heart, consider himself doomed, and, therefore, continue in his wicked path. He should repent so that his sins will be forgiven.

⁴⁰ This refers to spiritual values.

- and also from the other⁴¹ וְגַם־מִזֶּה
 withdraw not your hand; אַל־תִּנְחַתְּ אֶת־יָדְךָ
 for he who fears God כִּי־יִרָא אֱלֹהִים
 will discharge his duty to both.⁴² יֵצֵא אֶת־קָלָם:
 19. Wisdom gives [more] strength to the wise יט. הַחֲכָמָה תַּעֲזֹז לְחַכְמָם
 than ten rulers מַעֲשֵׂרָה שְׁלִישִׁים
 of the city. אֲשֶׁר הֵיוּ בְּעִיר:
 20. For there is not a righteous man on earth; כ. כִּי אָדָם אֵין צַדִּיק בְּאָרֶץ
 who does [only] good, and never sins.⁴³ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה טוֹב וְלֹא יִחַטָּא:
 21. Furthermore, of all the words כא. גַּם לְכָל־הַדְּבָרִים
 that are spoken, אֲשֶׁר יִדְבָּרוּ
 take them not to heart; אַל־תִּתֵּן לִבְךָ
 lest you hear your own servant אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִשְׁמַע אֶת־עַבְדְּךָ
 curse you. מְקַלְלֶךָ:
 22. For also there were many times כב. כִּי גַם־פְּעָמִים רַבּוֹת
 as you know in your heart יָדַע לִבְךָ
 that you, too, אֲשֶׁר גַּם־אַתָּה
 have cursed others. קָלַלְתָּ אֲחֵרִים:
 23. All this I have probed with wisdom; כג. כָּל־זֶה נִסֵּיתִי בַחֲכָמָה
 I said "I will be wise, אָמַרְתִּי אֲחַכְמָה
 but it [proved to be] far beyond me." וְהָיָא רְחוּקָה מִמֶּנִּי:
 24. That which was, is far beyond me; כד. רְחוּקָמָה־שֶׁהָיָה
 and so very deep, who can find it. וְעֵמֶק אֶמְקֵם מִי־מֵצְאוֹ:
 25. So I turned about and applied my heart כה. סָבֹאתִי אֲנִי וְלִבִּי
 to know, to explore, and to search for לְדַעַת וּלְחַוֵּר וּבְקֹשׁ
 wisdom and the reason for things, חֲכָמָה וְחֻשְׁבּוֹן
 and to know that wickedness is folly, וּלְדַעַת רָשָׁע כְּסָל
 and foolishness is madness. וְהַסְקָלוֹת הוֹלָלוֹת:

⁴¹ This refers to material values. Koheles says that one should live a well balanced life, neglecting neither the spiritual or the material.

⁴² He who fears God will maintain a healthy body in order to have the stamina to lead a vigorous and useful spiritual life.

⁴³ Complete and total righteousness is an unachievable goal. Man must succumb to sin in some manner—whether in act, speech or thought. (*Ibn Ezra*)

26. And I find more bitter than death,
the woman—
whose heart is full of traps and nets,
her hands as chains;
he who seeks to please God,
will escape from her,
but the sinner will be trapped by her.
27. See this is what I have found
says Koheles;
adding one to another to find an accounting.
28. For which my soul searches,
and yet I have not found;
one [worthy] man among a thousand
I have found,
but a [worthy] woman among all of them,
I have not found.
29. See, this only have I found:
that God made
man upright;
but they sought out many stratagems.
- כו. ומוצא אני מר ממוֹת
אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה
אֲשֶׁר־הִיא מְצוּדִים וְחֲרָמִים לִבָּהּ
אֲסוּרִים יְדֶיהָ
טוֹב לִפְנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
יִמְלֹט מִמֶּנָּה
וְחַוֵּטָא יִלְכָּד בָּהּ:
כו. רָאִיתִי מַצָּאתִי
אֶמְרָה קֹהֵלֶת
אֶתֶּת לֹאֶתֶת לִמְצָא חֲשׁבוֹן:
כח. אֲשֶׁר עוֹד־בִּקְשָׁה נַפְשִׁי
וְלֹא מִצָּאתִי
אָדָם אֶתֶּד מֵאֶלֶף
מִצָּאתִי
וְאִשָּׁה בְּכָל־אֵלֶּה
לֹא מִצָּאתִי:
כט. לְכֹד רָאִיתִי מַצָּאתִי
אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה הָאֱלֹהִים
אֶת־הָאָדָם יֹשֵׁר
וְהִמָּה בִקְשׁוֹ חֲשִׁבֹנוֹת רַבִּים:

Chapter VIII פרק ח

1. Who is like the wise man
and who knows how to interpret things?
A man's wisdom lights up his face,
and the boldness of his face is changed.
2. My [advice to you is]:
keep the King's command,
and do so because of the oath to God.⁴⁴
3. Do not hasten to leave His Presence
do not persist in doing evil;
- א. מִי כִהְחִלָּם
וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ פֶּשֶׁר דְּבָר
חֲקֵמַת אָדָם תֹּאִיר פָּנָיו
וְעוֹ פָּנָיו יִשְׁנָא:
ב. אֲנִי
פִי־מֶלֶךְ שְׁמוֹר
וְעַל דְּבָרְת שְׁבוּעַת אֱלֹהִים:
ג. אַל־תִּבְהַל מִפְּנֵי מֶלֶךְ
אַל־תַּעֲמֹד בְּדִבְרֵי רָע

⁴⁴ This refers to the oath the nation of Israel swore at Sinai to fulfill the commandments of the Torah. (*Rashi*)

- for whatever pleases Him, He does. כִּי כָל־אֲשֶׁר יִחְפֹּץ יַעֲשֶׂה:
4. For the King's word is all powerful; ד. בְּאֶשֶׁר דְּבַר־מֶלֶךְ שְׁלוֹטוֹן
and who can say to Him, וּמִי יֹאמַר־לוֹ
"What are You doing?" מַה־תַּעֲשֶׂה:
5. He who preserves the commandment ה. שׁוֹמֵר מִצְוָה
will know no evil; לֹא יֵדַע דְּבַר רָע
and [the significance of] time and judgement וְעֵת וּמִשְׁפָּט
is known by the wise man. יֵדַע לֵב חָכָם:
6. For every matter ו. כִּי לְכָל־חֶפֶץ
there is a time and judgement; יֵשׁ עֵת וּמִשְׁפָּט
for the evil of man overwhelms him. כִּי־רַעַת הָאָדָם רָכָה עָלָיו:
7. For he does not know what will be, ז. כִּי־אֵינָנו יֹדֵעַ מַה־שִּׁיְהִיָּה
for when it comes to pass כִּי בְּאֶשֶׁר יִהְיֶה
who will tell him? מִי יִגִּיד לוֹ:
8. Man has no power over the spirit, ח. אֵין אָדָם שְׁלִיט בְּרוּחַ
to retain the spirit, לְקַלּוֹת אֶת־הָרוּחַ
he has no power over the day of death, וְאֵין שְׁלוֹטוֹן בְּיּוֹם הַמָּוֶת
nor dispatch in battle; וְאֵין מִשְׁלַחַת בַּמִּלְחָמָה
nor will wickedness save its perpetrator. וְלֹא־יִמְלֹט רָשָׁע אֶת־בְּעָלָיו:
9. All this I have seen, ט. אֶת־כָּל־זֶה רָאִיתִי
and I applied my heart וְנָתַתִּין אֶת־לִבִּי
to [understand] all the work לְכָל־מַעֲשֶׂה
that is done under the sun; אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשֶׂה תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
there is a time עֵת
when man rules over man אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַט הָאָדָם בָּאָדָם
to his detriment. לְרָע לוֹ:
10. And so I have seen י. וּבִכֵּן רָאִיתִי
how the wicked were buried רָשָׁעִים קִבְּרִים
and came forth anew⁴⁵ וַבָּאֻ
[whereas the righteous] וּמִמָּקוֹם קְדוֹשׁ יִהְיוּ
- who were gone from the holy place

⁴⁵ Koheles declares that the wicked are perpetuated through their offspring who succeed them.

- were forgotten in the very city
where they performed [righteousness];
this, too, is vanity.
11. Because the execution of sentence
against evil deeds is not done quickly;
therefore, the hearts of men are filled
with encouragement to do evil.
12. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times
and his days are prolonged;
nevertheless, I know
that it will be well with those
who fear God,
who fear before His Presence.
13. And it will not be well with the wicked,
nor shall he prolong his days
which are like a shadow;
because he does not fear
before the Presence of God.
14. There is a vanity
which is done upon the earth:
there are righteous men
who suffer
as if they had performed [the same] deeds
as those who are wicked;
and there are wicked men who receive
[reward] as if they had performed
the same deeds as the righteous;
I said that this too is vanity.
15. I extolled [the concept of] rejoicing⁴⁶
for there is nothing better for man
under the sun
- וְשִׁכְחוּ בְּעִיר
אֲשֶׁר בָּן-עָשׂוּ
גַם-זֶה הֶבֶל:
י. אֲשֶׁר אֵין-נִעְשֶׂה כְּתוֹנָם
מַעֲשֵׂה הָרָעָה מִהֵרָה
עַל-כֵּן מְלֵא לֵב בְּנֵי-הָאָדָם
בְּהֵם לַעֲשׂוֹת רָע:
יב. אֲשֶׁר חֲטָא עֲשֵׂה רַע מֵאָת
וּמֵאָרֶיךָ לוֹ
כִּי גַם-יִוָּדַע אֲנִי
אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה-טוֹב
לִירְאֵי הָאֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר יִירָאוּ מִלְּפָנָיו:
יג. וְטוֹב לֹא-יִהְיֶה לְרָשָׁע
וְלֹא-יֵאָרֶיךָ יָמִים
כַּצֶּל
אֲשֶׁר אֵינְנו יִרָא
מִלְּפָנֵי אֱלֹהִים:
יד. יֵשׁ-הֶבֶל
אֲשֶׁר נִעְשֶׂה עַל-הָאָרֶץ
אֲשֶׁר וְיֵשׁ צַדִּיקִים
אֲשֶׁר מִגִּיעַ אֲלֵהֶם
כַּמַּעֲשֶׂה
הָרָשָׁעִים
וְיֵשׁ רָשָׁעִים שֶׁמִּגִּיעַ אֲלֵהֶם
כַּמַּעֲשֶׂה
הַצַּדִּיקִים
אֲמַרְתִּי שְׁגַם-זֶה הֶבֶל:
טו. וְשִׁבְחָתִי אֲנִי אֶת-הַשְׂמֵחָה
אֲשֶׁר אֵין-טוֹב לָאָדָם
תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ

⁴⁶ Koheles extolls the virtue of **קִשְׁמָה בְּחֵלֶק**—that a person should rejoice in his portion. (*Rashi*)

than to eat and drink and be joyful;⁴⁶
and this will accompany him in his toil
[all] the days of his life
which God has given him
under the sun.

16. When I applied my heart
to know wisdom
and to observe the activity
that is done on the earth—
for neither by day nor by night
does he see sleep with his eyes.⁴⁷

17. And I saw
all the works of God—
that man cannot discover
the work that is done
under the sun;
and though a man labor
to seek it out he will not find it;
and even though a wise man declares
that he knows it,
he, too, will not be able to discover it.

כִּי אִם-לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ
וְהוּא יִלְוֶנוּ בְּעֵמָל
יְמֵי תַיִו
אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן-לּוֹ הָאֱלֹהִים
תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ:

טו. כַּאֲשֶׁר נִתְּנִי אֶת-לִבִּי
לְדַעַת חִכְמָה
וְלִרְאוֹת אֶת-הַעֲנָן
אֲשֶׁר נֹעֶשֶׂה עַל-הָאָרֶץ
כִּי גַם בַּיּוֹם וּבַלַּיְלָה
שׁוֹנֶה בְּעֵינָיו אֵינְנוּ רֹאֶה:
יו. וְרָאִיתִי
אֶת-כָּל-מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים
כִּי לֹא יוּכַל הָאָדָם לְמַצּוֹא
אֶת-הַמַּעֲשֵׂה אֲשֶׁר נֹעֶשֶׂה
תַּחַת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ
כִּפְשָׁל אֲשֶׁר יַעֲמַל הָאָדָם
לְבַקֵּשׁ וְלֹא יִמָּצֵא
וְגַם אִם-יֵאמֶר הַחֲכָם
לְדַעַת
לֹא יוּכַל לְמַצּוֹ:

Chapter IX פרק ט

1. For all this
I put to my heart
and I sought to make all this clear:
that the righteous and the wise
and their works are in the hand of God;
whether it be love or hate,
man does not know,

א. כִּי אֶת-כָּל-זֶה
נִתְּנִי אֶל-לִבִּי
וְלִבּוֹר אֶת-כָּל-זֶה
אֲשֶׁר הַצְדִּיקִים וְהַחֲכָמִים
וְנַעֲבְדֵיהֶם בְּיַד הָאֱלֹהִים
גַּם-אִהְבָה גַּם-שִׁנְאָה
אֵין יוֹדֵעַ הָאָדָם

⁴⁷ He is so engrossed in this study that sleep eluded him. (*Ibn Ezra*)

- all is before them.⁴⁸ הַכֹּל לִפְנֵיהֶם:
2. All things come alike to all;
the same fate [awaits]
the righteous and the wicked,
the good and the pure and the impure,
to him who brings offerings,
and to him who does not bring offerings;
as is with the good man
so is it with the sinner,
as is with the one who swears [easily]
so is it with the one who fears an oath.
3. This is an evil in all
that is done under the sun:
that the same fate awaits all;
[therefore],⁴⁹ the hearts of men
are filled with evil,
and madness is in their hearts
during their lifetime,
and afterwards they join the dead.
4. For to him that is joined
to all the living
there is hope;
for a live dog is better
than a dead lion.
5. For the living know that they will die;
but the dead know nothing,
and there is no further reward for them,
for their memory is forgotten.
- ב. הַכֹּל בְּאִשֶּׁר לְכָל
מִקְרָה אֶחָד
לַצְדִּיק וְלָרָשָׁע
לְטוֹב וְלִשְׁהוֹר וְלִטָּמָא
וְלִזְנֵחַ
וְלְאִשֶּׁר אֵינָנוּ זֹבְחִים
כְּטוֹב
כְּחַטָּא
הַנִּשְׁבָּע
כְּאִשֶּׁר שְׂבוּעָה יֵרָא:
ג. זֶה רָע בְּכָל
אֲשֶׁר-נַעֲשֶׂה תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
כִּי-מִקְרָה אֶחָד לְכָל
וְגַם לֵב בְּנֵי-יְהוָה אֵם
מְלֹא-רָע
וְהוֹלִלּוֹת בְּלִבָּם
בְּחַיֵּיהֶם
וְאַחֲרָיו אֶל-הַמֵּתִים:
ד. כִּי-מִי אֲשֶׁר יִחְזֹר
אֶל כָּל-הַחַיִּים
יֵשׁ בְּטַחֲוֹן
כִּי-לִכְלֹב חַי הוּא טוֹב
מִן-הָאֲרִיָּה הַמֵּת:
ה. כִּי הַחַיִּים יוֹדְעִים שִׁמְמוֹ
וְהַמֵּתִים אֵינָם יוֹדְעִים מְאוּמָּה
וְאֵין-עוֹד לָהֶם שָׂכָר
כִּי נִשְ�כַּח זִכְרָם:

⁴⁸ The *Ibn Ezra* explains that the phrase "all is before them" refers to the concept of Divine Providence. All is arranged by the Almighty. *Rashi* writes that "all is before them" refers to the fact that man has the intellect to distinguish between what God loves and what He hates.

⁴⁹ Since the same fate awaits all, they attribute everything to chance and not to Divine Providence. This can be of benefit to the righteous as well as the wicked. (*Rashi*)

6. Also their love, their hate,
and their jealousy have already perished;
and a portion
they will never again have
in anything that is done under the sun.

7. Go eat your bread in joy,
and drink your wine with a glad heart;
for already
God has accepted your deeds.

8. At all times,
let your garments be white;
and your head never lack oil.
9. See [to enjoy] life
with the wife you love,
all the days of your vain life
which He has given you under the sun—
all the days of your vanity;—
for that is your portion in life,
and in your labor
in which you toil under the sun.

10. Whatever you are able to do
do with all your might;
for there is neither deed, nor strategy,
nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave
where you are going.

11. Again I saw under the sun:
that the race is not to the swift,
nor the battle to the strong,
nor does bread [come] to the wise,
nor riches to men of understanding,
nor favor to the learned;
for time and chance happen to them all.

12. For also,

ו. גם אהבתם גם שנאתם
גם קנאתם כבר אבדה
וחלק
אין להם עוד לעולם
בכל אשר נעשה תחת השמש:
ז. לך אכל בשמחה לחמך
ושתה בלב טוב יינה
כי כבר
רצה האלהים את מעשיך;
ח. בכל-עת
יהיו בגדיך לבנים
ושמן על ראשך אל-יחסר;
ט. ראה חיים
עם-אשה אשר-אהבת
כל-ימי חיי הבלך
אשר נתן לך תחת השמש
כל ימי הבלך
כי הוא חלקך בחיים
ובצמלך
אשר-אתה עמל תחת השמש:
י. כל אשר תמצא ידך לעשות
בכחך עשה
כי אין מעשה וחשבון
ודעת וחקמה בשאול
אשר אתה הולך שמה:
יא. שבת י וראה תחת השמש
כי לא לקלים המרוץ
ולא לגבורים המלחמה
ולא לחכמים לחם
וגם לא לנבנים עשר
וגם לא ליודעים חן
כי-עת ופגע יקרה את-כלם:
יב. כי גם

man does not know his time,
 as fish that are caught in a fatal net,
 as birds that are caught in a snare;
 like them, men are snared
 in the moment of misfortune,
 when it falls upon them suddenly.

13. This, too, I have seen [concerning] wisdom
 under the sun;
 and its impact was great upon me.

14. [There was] a little city,
 with few men within it;
 and a mighty king came upon it
 and surrounded it
 and built great bulwarks against it.

15. But there was found in the city,
 a poor wise man,
 and he saved the city with his wisdom;
 yet no person remembered
 that poor man.

16. And [yet] I said:
 "Wisdom is better than might;
 [although] a poor man's wisdom
 is despised,
 and his words go unheeded.

17. The words of the wise, spoken gently,
 are [more] acceptable
 more than the shouts of a ruler of fools.

18. Wisdom is better than weapons of war;
 but one sinner
 destroys a multitude of good.

לֹא יָדַע הָאָדָם אֶת־עֵתוֹ
 כַּדְּגִים שֶׁנֶּאֱחָזִים בַּמִּצּוֹדָה רָעָה
 וְכַצִּפּוֹרִים הָאֶחָזוּת בַּפֶּחַח
 כֹּהֵם יוֹקְשִׁים בְּגִי הָאָדָם
 לְעֵת רָעָה
 כְּשֶׁתִּפּוֹל עֲלֵיהֶם פֶּתְאִים:
 יג. גַּם־זֶה רָאִיתִי חֲכָמָה
 תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
 וְגִדּוּלָהּ הָיָא אֵלָי:
 יד. עִיר קְטַנָּה
 וְאִנְשֵׁים בָּהּ מְעַט
 וּבָא־אֵלֶיהָ מֶלֶךְ גָּדוֹל
 וְסָבַב אֹתָהּ
 וּבָנָה עָלֶיהָ מִצּוֹדִים גְּדֹלִים:
 טו. וּמָצָא בָּהּ
 אִישׁ מְסָפֵן חָכָם
 וּמִלֹּט־הוּא אֶת־הָעִיר בַּחֲכָמָתוֹ
 וְאָדָם לֹא זָכַר
 אֶת־הָאִישׁ הַמְּסָפֵן הַהוּא:
 טז. וְאָמַרְתִּי אָנִי
 טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִגְּבוּרָה
 וְחֲכָמַת הַמְּסָפֵן
 בְּזוּיָהּ
 וּדְבָרָיו אֵינָם נִשְׁמָעִים:
 יז. דְּבָרֵי חֲכָמִים בְּנִחַת
 נִשְׁמָעִים
 מִזְעָקַת מוֹשֵׁל בַּכְּסִילִים:
 יח. טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִכְּלֵי קָרֶב
 וְחוֹטֵא אֶחָד
 יִאַבֵּד טוֹבָה הַרְבֵּה:

Chapter X פרק י

1. Dead flies decay and pollute
the perfumer's ointment;⁵⁰
wisdom and honor are outweighed
by a little foolishness.
2. The heart [understanding] of a wise man
is at his right hand;
but the heart of a fool is at his left.
3. Also, when a fool walks by the way,
his heart [understanding] fails him;
and proclaims to all that he is a fool.
4. If the spirit [anger] of the Ruler
flares up against you,
do not leave your place;⁵¹
for softness pacifies great offenses.
5. There is an evil
which I have seen under the sun;
like an error emanating from the ruler.⁵²
6. Folly is set upon great heights;
but the rich sit in low places.⁵³
7. I have seen slaves on horses,
and princes walking on foot
like slaves upon the earth.
8. He who digs a pit will fall into it;
he who breaks down a fence
will be bitten by a snake.
9. He who removes stones will be hurt by them;

א. זבובי מִוֹת יְבֹאִישׁ יִבְיַע

שֶׁמֶן רוֹקֵחַ

יִקָּר מִחִכְמָה מִכְבוֹד

סְכָלוּת מַעֲט:

ב. לֵב חָכָם

לְיָמִינוֹ

וְלֵב כְּסִיל לְשִׁמְאֻלוֹ;

ג. וְגַם בִּפְתָּיִךְ כְּשֶׁסָּקַל הָלַךְ

לְבוֹ חָסֵר

וְאָמַר לְכָל סָקַל הוּא:

ד. אִם-רוּחַ הַמּוֹשֵׁל

תִּפְעֹלָה עָלֶיךָ

מִקּוֹמְךָ אַל-תִּנָּח

כִּי מִרְפָּא יֵצֵחַ חַטָּאִים גְּדוֹלִים:

ה. יֵשׁ רָעָה רְאִיתִי

תַּחַת הַשָּׁמַשׁ

כְּשֶׁנִּגָּה שִׁיֵּצֵא מִלִּפְנֵי הַשִּׁלִּיט:

ו. נִתֵּן הַסָּקַל בְּמִרוֹמִים רַבִּים

וְעֹשִׂירִים בַּשָּׁפֶל יֵשְׁבוּ:

ז. רְאִיתִי עֲבָדִים עַל-סוּסִים

וְשָׂרִים הֹלְכִים

כְּעֲבָדִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ:

ח. חֹפֵר גּוֹמֵץ בּוֹ יִפּוֹל

וּפֹרֵץ גֹּדֵר

יִשְׁכָּנוּ נָחָשׁ:

ט. מְסִיעַ אֲבָנִים יַעֲצֹב בָּהֶם

⁵⁰ A fly is insignificant yet it spoils precious perfume. So, too, even a minor transgression can outweigh much wisdom and nobility. (*Rashi*)

⁵¹ If through your misdeeds God's anger is kindled against you, do not be moved from your efforts to perform good deeds thinking "of what good is my righteousness." (*Rashi*)

⁵² Just as a royal decree made in error is irreversible so are the Divine decrees of God. (*Rashi*)

⁵³ This refers to the members of the Sanhedrin—rich in wisdom and learning, of whom it is written, "they sit upon the ground and keep silent." (Lamentations 2:10)

- he who splits logs will be endangered by them.
 10. If the axe is blunt, and one has not sharpened its edge, he must exert more strength; there is more profit in a skill of wisdom.
 11. If the snake bites before it is charmed; there is no advantage in having a charmer.
 12. The words of a wise man win favor; but the lips of a fool devour him.
 13. The beginning of his words is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness.
 14. The fool multiplies words; man knows not what will be; and what will be after him, who can tell him.
 15. The labor of the fools exhaust them; for he does not know the way to the city.⁵⁴
 16. Woe to you, O land, if your king is a [mere] lad and whose officers feast in the morning.
 17. Fortunate are you, land whose king is a free [noble] man; and your officers feast at the proper time—in strength and not in drunkenness.
 18. Where there is slothfulness, the ceiling sags, and where there is idleness, the house leaks.
- בֹּקֵעַ עֲצִים
 יִסָּכֵן בָּם:
 י. אִם־קֶהֱהַ הַבֶּרֶזֶל
 וְהוּא לֹא־פָנִים קָלָל
 וְתִילִים יִגְבֹּר
 וְיִתְרוֹן הַכְּשִׁיר חֻקָּה:
 יא. אִם־יִשּׁוּף הַנָּחָשׁ
 בְּלוֹא־לְחֹשׁ
 וְאֵין יִתְרוֹן לְבַעַל הַלְשׁוֹן:
 יב. דְּבַר־יִי־חֲכָם חָן
 וְשִׁפְתוֹת כְּסִיל תִּבְלַעְנָו:
 יג. תְּחִלַּת דְּבַר־יִי־פִיֹּהוּ סִכְלוֹת
 וְאַחֲרֵית פִּיֹּהוּ הוֹלִלוֹת רָעָה:
 יד. וְהִסְכִּיל יִרְבֶּה דְּבָרִים
 לֹא־יָדַע הָאָדָם מַה־שִּׁיְהִיָּה
 וְאֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה מֵאַחֲרָיו
 מִי יֵגִיד לוֹ:
 טו. עֲמַל הַכְּסִילִים תִּיגְעֶנּוּ
 אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַע לָלֶכֶת אֶל־עִיר:
 טז. אֵי־לָךְ אֶרֶץ
 שְׁמֶלֶכָה גֶּעֶר
 וְשָׂרֶיהָ בִּבְקֶרֶר יֹאכְלוּ:
 יז. אֲשֶׁרֶיהָ אֶרֶץ
 שְׁמֶלֶכָה בֶּן־חֹרִים
 וְשָׂרֶיהָ
 בְּעֵת יֹאכְלוּ
 בְּגִבּוֹרָה וְלֹא בְשִׁחִי:
 יח. בְּעֲצֻלִּים יִמָּךְ הַמִּקְרָה
 וּבְשִׁפְלוֹת יָדִים
 יִדְלֹף הַבַּיִת:

⁵⁴ The fool sets goals for himself that he cannot possibly attain. While he may know what he is striving for he does not know how to achieve it. Naturally, under such circumstances he will exhaust himself wandering in blind alleyways while getting nowhere. He knows of the city but does not know how to get there.

19. A feast is made for laughter,
and wine will gladden life;
and money answers all things.⁵⁵
20. Even in your thoughts
do not curse the king,
and in your bed-chamber
do not curse the rich;
for a bird of the skies
may carry [your] voice,
and that which has wings
will reveal the matter.
- יט. לשחוק עשׂים לחם
וניין ישמח חיים
והכסף יענה את הכל:
כ. גם במדעך
מלך אל תקלל
ובחדרי משכבך
אל תקלל עשיר
כי עוף השמים
יוליך את הקול
ובעל כנפים
יגיד דבר:

Chapter XI פרק יא

1. Cast your bread upon the waters,
for after many days you will find it.
2. Contribute to seven and even eight;
for you never know
what calamity will come upon the earth.⁵⁶
3. When the clouds are filled with rain
they will empty themselves upon the earth;
and if a tree falls in the south
or in the north,
in the place where the tree falls
there it remains.⁵⁷
4. He who watches [waits] for the wind,
will never sow;
- א. שלח לחמך על־פני המים
כי־ברב הימים תמצאנו:
ב. תן חלק לשבעה וגם לשמונה
כי לא תדע
מה־יהיה רעה על־הארץ:
ג. אם־ימלאו העבים נשם
על־הארץ יריקו
ואם־יפול עץ בדרום
ואם בצפון
מקום שיפול העץ
שם יהוא:
ד. שמר רוח
לא יזרע

⁵⁵ Koheles completes the picture of corrupt, pleasure-loving officials who neglect their 'house' and their obligations to the people. Idleness brings on moral decay and the problems of the country are forgotten as they revel in drunkenness. Money is used to buy off individuals or groups who criticize their inept rule.

⁵⁶ A person never knows when he will become destitute and require the assistance of others. Koheles declares that such a person might be saved from poverty by virtue of his former acts of charity. (*Rashi*)

⁵⁷ The Talmud (*Avodah Zora* 31a) asks: "What is the meaning of 'In the place where the tree falls, there it remains?'" The Talmud answers: "The fruit of the tree will not fall far from it." The nature of children resembles that of their father.

- and he who looks to the clouds
will never reap.
5. Just as you do not know
the way of the wind,
nor the nature of that which is hidden
in the womb of her that is with child,
so will you never know
the working of God
Who does all things.
6. [Therefore] in the morning sow your seed,
and in the evening do not remain idle;
for you do not know which will prosper,
whether this or that,
or whether both are equally good.⁵⁸
7. And the light is sweet;
and it is good [pleasant] for the eyes
to behold the sun.
8. For even if many years
should man live,
let him rejoice in all of them;
and remember the days of darkness,
for they will be many;
all that comes is vanity.
9. Rejoice, young man, in your youth,
and let your heart cheer you
in the days of your youth,
follow the ways of your heart
and the sight of your eyes;
- וְרֹאֶה בְּעָבִים
לֹא יִקְצֹר:
ה. כַּאֲשֶׁר אֵינְךָ יוֹדֵעַ
מַה־דֶּרֶךְ הַרוּחַ
בְּעֲצָמִים
בְּבֶטֶן הַמְּלָאָה
כִּכָּה לֹא תֵדַע
אֶת־מַעֲשֵׂה הָאֱלֹהִים
אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַכֹּל:
ו. בַּבֹּקֶר זָרַע אֶת־זֶרְעֶךָ
וּלְעֶרֶב אַל־תִּפְנֹת יָדְךָ
כִּי אֵינְךָ יוֹדֵעַ אִי זֶה יִכָּשֶׁר
הַזֶּה אוֹ־זֶה
וְאִם־שְׁנֵיהֶם כְּאֶחָד טוֹבִים:
ז. וּמִתּוֹךְ הָאֹר
וְטוֹב לְעֵינַיִם
לִרְאוֹת אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ:
ח. כִּי אִם־שָׁנִים הָרַבָּה
יִחְיֶה הָאָדָם
בְּכֻלָּם יִשְׂמַח
וַיִּזְכֹּר אֶת־יְמֵי הַחֹשֶׁךְ
כִּי־הָרַבָּה יִהְיוּ
כָּל־שָׂבָא הֶבֶל:
ט. שִׂמְחָ בְּחֹר בְּיָלְדוּתְךָ
וַיִּטִּיבֵךְ לִבְךָ
בְּיָמֶי בְּחֹר וְחֵיד
וְהִלֵּךְ בְּדַרְכֵי לִבְךָ
וּבִמְרֹאֶה עֵינֶיךָ

⁵⁸ Rabbi Akiva expounded on this verse: he who studies Torah in his youth should also study in his old age (the morning and evening of his life). Rabbi Yehoshua advises: "If a poor man approaches you for help in the morning give him assistance. If another comes in the evening help him also, for you do not know which one is really deserving of your help. If they were both deserving then certainly your charity was worthwhile. (*Avos of Rabbi Nosson* 3)

but realize that for all these things, וְדַע כִּי עַל־כָּל־אֵלֶּה
 God will bring you to judgement.⁵⁹ יְבִיאֲךָ הָאֱלֹהִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט:
 10. Therefore, banish anger from your heart י. וְהִסַּר פְּעַס מִלִּבְךָ
 and remove evil from your flesh; וְהִעֲבֵר רָעָה מִבְּשָׁרְךָ
 for childhood and youth are vanity. כִּי־הֵילֵל דּוֹת וְהַשְׁחָרוֹת הֶבֶל:

Chapter XII פרק יב

1. So remember your Creator א. וזכור את־בּוֹרְאֶיךָ
 in the days of your youth; בְּיָמֶיךָ בַּחוּרֹתֶיךָ
 before the evil days come, עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָבֹאוּ יָמֶיךָ הָרָעָה
 and the years draw near וְהַגִּיעוּ שָׁנִים
 of which you will say: אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר
 “I have no desire in them.”⁶⁰ אִין־לִי כְהֶם חִפְץִי:
 2. Before the darkening of the sun, ב. עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִחַשֵׁךְ הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ
 the light, the moon and the stars; וְהָאוֹר וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְהַכּוֹכָבִים
 and the clouds return after the rain.⁶¹ וְשָׁבוּ הָעָנָנִים אַחֲרֵי הַגֶּשֶׁם:
 3. In the day when trembling prevails ג. בְּיוֹם שִׁיזְעוּ
 over the preservers of the house⁶² שְׁמֵרֵי הַבַּיִת
 and the strong men will be bent⁶³ וְהַחֲצוֹנוֹתוֹ אֲנָשֵׁי הַחֵיל
 and the grinders cease because they are few,⁶⁴ וּבָטְלוּ הַטְּחִינוֹת כִּי מְעַט
 and the starers in the windows are dimmed.⁶⁵ וְחֹשְׁכוֹ הָרְאוֹת בַּאֲרָבוֹת:

⁵⁹ Because the dictates of man's heart and the desire of his eyes are not always in the best interests of his fellow man or in his relation to God, Koheles admonishes man to be aware of the ultimate day of judgement.

⁶⁰ Some commentaries hold that this phrase refers to the Messianic era where there is neither merit or wrongdoing. It means: as this is an era of spiritual perfection and of material abundance no opportunity for gaining merit will exist.

Others say that this refers to old age when the worldly delights are no longer an attraction. Man is admonished not to postpone to old age the fulfillment of Divine commandments. In his youth he acquires merit as he is able to show that he overcame his evil inclination, but in his old age all temptations and trials have faded away.

⁶¹ In the following verses Koheles presents a graphic description of man's last years. According to the Targum the sun, the light, the moon and the stars refer to the light of the face, the sparkle of the eyes, the cheeks and the eyes. In old age all these features are diminished.

⁶² According to the Talmud (*Shabbos* 152a) this refers to the ribs. In old age the skeletal structure which protects the vital inner organs begins to weaken and tremble.

⁶³ This refers to the legs which support the entire body. In old age they begin to shake. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁴ The teeth cease to function properly because in old age they are few. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁵ This refers to the eyes that look out through their sockets. (*Rashi*)

4. And the doors to the street will be shut,⁶⁶ וְסָגְרוּ דְלֹתַיִם בְּשׁוּק
when the sound of the grinding is low;⁶⁷ בְּשִׁפְלֵי קוֹל הַטְחֲנָה
and when one will awaken וַיִּקְוֹם
at the sound of a bird, לְקוֹל הַצִּפּוֹר
and muffled will be וַיִּשְׁחֹ
the daughters [sounds] of song.⁶⁸ כָּל-בָּנוֹת הַשִּׁיר:
5. Also, when they will fear heights, ה. גַּם מִגְבֵּה יִירָאוּ
and terrors on the road,⁶⁹ וַתַּחַתְּתִים בְּדֶרֶךְ
and the almond tree will blossom⁷⁰ וַיִּנְאֹץ הַשֶּׁקֶד
and the grasshopper will be a burden,⁷¹ וַיִּסְתַּבֵּל הַתִּגְב
and the desire will fail; וַתִּפֹּר הָאַבְיוֹנָה
for, [in this manner,] man goes כִּי-הֵלֶךְ הָאָדָם
to his eternal home, אֶל-בֵּית עוֹלָמוֹ
and the mourners go about the streets. וְסִבְבוּ בְשׁוּק הַסּוֹפְדִים:
6. Before the snapping ו. עַד אֲשֶׁר לֹא-יִרְחֹק
of the silver cord, חֶבֶל הַכֶּסֶף
and the golden bowl is shattered;⁷² וַתִּרְצֵץ גִּלְת הַזָּהָב
and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, וַתִּשְׁבֹּר כַּד עַל-הַמַּבּוּעַ
and the wheel is shattered into the pit. וַנִּרְצֵץ הַגִּלְגָּל אֶל-הַבּוֹר:
7. And the dust returns to the earth ז. וַיָּשָׁב הָעָפָר עַל-הָאָרֶץ
as it was; כְּשֶׁהָיָה
and the spirit returns to God וְהָרוּחַ תָּשׁוּב אֶל-הָאֱלֹהִים
Who gave it. אֲשֶׁר נָתַנָּה:
8. Vanity of vanities says Koheles, ח. הִבֵּל הַבָּלִים אָמַר הַקּוֹהֵלֶת

⁶⁶ The apertures and organs of elimination cease to function properly. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁷ There is a slowdown in the function of the digestive system. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁸ The senses are diminished and the sound of song can no longer be appreciated. (*Rashi*)

⁶⁹ To the old man even a slight incline appears to be a high mountain and he is afraid. (*Rashi*)

⁷⁰ The almond is one of the fastest and earliest blossoming trees. It symbolizes old age which quickly overtakes him. (*Rashi*)

⁷¹ According to *Metsudas Dovid*, this is a metaphorical picture of the frailties of old age when he is so weak that even a grasshopper will seem like a burden on him.

⁷² The "silver cord" and the "golden bowl" refer to the spinal cord and the brain. They are referred to in these terms because of the vital function they perform. When the spinal cord is severed the nervous system is destroyed and deterioration of brain and body follow. (*Rashi*)

- all is vanity. הַכֹּל הֶבֶל:
9. And besides that Koheles was wise, וַיֵּתֵר שְׂהִיָּה קִהְלֵת חָכָם
he also taught the people knowledge; עוֹד לְמַד־לְעַת אֶת־הָעָם
he weighed and probed— וַאֲנִן וְחִקֵּר
and adapted many proverbs. תִּקַּן מִשְׁלִים הִרְבָּה:
10. Koheles sought to find words of delight; י. בִּקֵּשׁ קִהְלֵת לְמַצֵּא דְבָרֵי־חֶפֶץ
and to write in a proper way וּכְתוּב יִשָּׂר
words of truth. דְּבָרֵי אֱמֶת:
11. The words of the wise are like goads,⁷³ יא. דְּבָרֵי חָכָמִים כַּדְרָבָנוֹת
like well fastened nails [are the words] וּכְמִשְׁמָרוֹת נְטוּעִים
of the masters of [learned] assemblies; בְּעֲלֵי אֲסֻפּוֹת
all were given from one Shepherd.⁷⁴ נִתְּנוּ מִרְעֵה אֶחָד:
12. And, furthermore, my son, be admonished; יב. וַיֵּתֵר מִהֶמָּה בְּנִי הִזְהָר
of making many books, there is no end, עֲשׂוֹת סִפְרִים הִרְבָּה אֵין קֵץ
and much study wears away the flesh.⁷⁵ וְלִהַג הִרְבָּה יִגְעַת בָּשָׂר:
13. In conclusion, after all has been heard; יג. סוֹף דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע
fear God, אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרָא
and preserve His commandments, וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שְׁמֹר
for this is the whole [duty] of man. כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם:
14. For every deed יד. כִּי אֶת־כָּל־מַעֲשֵׂה
God will bring into judgement, הָאֱלֹהִים יָבֵא בְּמִשְׁפָּט
and every hidden thing; עַל כָּל־נִעְלָם
whether good or bad. אִם־טוֹב וְאִם־רָע:
- (In conclusion, after all has been heard; (סוֹף דְּבַר הַכֹּל נִשְׁמָע
fear God, אֶת־הָאֱלֹהִים יִרָא
and preserve His commandments, וְאֶת־מִצְוֹתָיו שְׁמֹר
for this is the whole [duty] of man.) כִּי־זֶה כָּל־הָאָדָם:)

⁷³ Just as the goad causes the cow to stay on the right path so do words of the Sages lead men along the right paths of life. (*Rashi*)

⁷⁴ This refers to the one Torah given by the One God through Moses, the one leader of the one nation.

⁷⁵ This refers to the study of non-Torah subjects which causes exhaustion without adequate compensation. Exhausting oneself in the study of Torah is of benefit in this world and in the World to Come.

Preface to Eichah

"David's song . . . even as I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me." (Tehilim, 23.)

The Book of Eichah chronicles the history of the ruination of the Bais Hamikdosh, the devastation of the sacred city of Jerusalem, and the anguish of a people decimated by its enemies and bereft of Sanctuary and homeland. It was written by the prophet Yirmiyahu, himself a victim of the national catastrophe, and it details his personal grief, as well as the suffering of the people. Moreover, the story of Eichah represents Jewish tragedy throughout the ages. Its sombre cadences are cantillated during the synagogue services on Tisha B'av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash and the day of national Jewish mourning.

Yet, aside from its message of grief and lamentation, aside, even, from the indomitable spirit of consolation and rebirth with which it closes—aside from these, the overarching theme of Eichah is the sense of the presence of a just and loving God at every turn in the sweep of history; and, indeed, the palpable nature of that Presence, even as the Babylonian legions wreaked ruin across the hills of Jerusalem, even as the Temple smouldered, even as the nation walked, with the prophet, in the valley of the shadow of death.

"God brought me grief" "From a lofty place He hurled fire into my bones" "God has placed me in the hands of those whom I cannot abide" The soul of the prophet cries out with grief, yet he does not deny God, nor avoid Him. He senses Him, recognizing Him as the source of his very anguish, as he knows Him as the source of his life. And as He recognizes His loving role in granting life, He must acknowledge the justice of His retribution. "God is just, for it is I who flouted His word."

"Adonoy, return us to you . . . rejuvenate our days as in early times."

This verse completes the book, and encapsules, more than any other, the prophetic vision of the God of Eichah. His Presence, even in the valley, is with us. His benevolence has generated justice and retribution so that there may arise, from the ashes of the devastation, a new day of return and rejuvenation. Indeed, it is He who will originate the return, in response to the prophet's appeal, He who awaits the day.

The Book of Eichah thus takes its place, in the sacred canon of Judaism, as the voice of Jewish anguish and suffering, as the memorial to the nation's bygone glory, and as the document of eternal Jewish faith.

EICHAH איכה

Chapter 1 פרק א

1. How can it be¹ that she sits in isolation
the city teeming with people
has become like² a widow?
Immense among nations, noble among provinces—
she has become a payer of tribute.
2. She weeps piteously in the night,
her tear on her cheek.
No one consoles her, among all her lovers.
All of her friends have betrayed her,
they have become her enemies.
3. Yehudah was exiled because of torment
and excessive toil.
[Even] when she dwelt among the nations,
she found no rest.
All her pursuers overtook her between the barriers.³
4. The roads of *Tzion* grieve,
for lack of festival visitors.
All her gateways are in ruins,
her *Kohanim* groan,
her maidens mourn; and she is embittered.
5. Her oppressors have become elevated,⁴

א. איכה | ישבה בודד
העיר רבתי עם
היתה כאלמנה
רבתי בגוים שרתי במדינות
היתה למס:
ב. בכו תבכה בלילה
ודמעתה על לחיה
אין לה מנחם מפל-אהביה
כל-רעיה בגדו בה
היו לה לאיבים:
ג. גלתה יהודה מעלי
ומרב עבודה
היא ישבה בגוים
לא מצאה מנוח
כל-רדמיה השיגיה בין המצורים:
ד. דרכי ציון אבלות
מכלי באי מועד
כל-שעריה שוממים
כהניה נאנחים
בתולתיה נוגות והיא מר-לה:
ה. היו צריה לראש

¹ The word *איכה*, "How can it be?", is identical with *איכה*, "Where are you?", the first words spoken by God to Adam after he had eaten the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. (Bereishis, 3:9.) This meant, "Because of your sin, you have forfeited your place in the Garden. Where, then, are you?" Indeed, Adam was subsequently banished from the Garden of Eden (ibid. vs. 23, 24.) The Jewish people, as well, forfeited their place in the sacred city of Jerusalem because of their sins. Thus, the prophet's opening word, *איכה*, suggests that God asks them, like Adam, "Where are you?" (Midrash.)

² 'Like' a widow, but not actually a widow. Her 'husband'—The Shechinah—will eventually return. (Rashi.)

³ During the three weeks between the seventeenth day of Tamuz, when the walls of Jerusalem were breached, and the ninth day of Av, when the Temple was destroyed. (Rashi.)

⁴ Onkelos was a nephew of the Roman general Titus. He summoned his uncle from the dead by means of the occult, and asked his advice concerning the Jews. 'Persecute them,' Titus replied, 'and you will rise to greatness,

her enemies are at ease. אֲיֹבֵיָהּ שְׁלוֹ
 For Adonoy has brought her grief כִּי־יְהוָה הוֹגֵה
 for her excessive iniquity. עַל־רֹב פְּשָׁעֶיהָ
 Her young were taken captive before the oppressors. עוֹלָלֶיהָ הִלְכוּ שָׁבִי לַפְּנֵי־צָר:
 6. Gone from the city of *Tzion*, ו. וַיֵּצֵא מִבֶּת־צִיּוֹן
 is all her splendor⁵ כָּל־הִדְרָהּ
 her nobles have become like elk הָיוּ שָׂרֶיהָ כְּאַיִלִם
 who could find no pasture, לֹא־מָצְאוּ מְרֻעָה
 plodding powerlessly before the pursuer. וַיֵּלְכוּ בְּלֹא־כֹחַ לִפְנֵי רוֹדְהָ:
 7. Jerusalem, remembered the days of her [ruin] ז. זָכְרָה יְרוּשָׁלַם יָמֶיהָ
 [which brought her] torment and lamenting; עֲנִיָּה וּמְרוּדֶיהָ
 [and] all the treasures כָּל מַחְמְדֶיהָ
 she had in early times. אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם
 When her people fell into the hands of the oppressors בְּנֹפֶל עַמָּהּ בְּיַד־צָר
 and no one came to her aid, וְאִין עֹזֵר לָהּ
 her enemies watched her, רְאוּהָ צָרִים
 laughing derisively when she was curbed שָׂחָקוּ עַל־מִשְׁפָּתָהּ:
 (from celebrating her holidays).
 8. Jerusalem has grievously sinned, ח. חָטְא חָטָאָה יְרוּשָׁלַם
 and, therefore, has become a wanderer. עַל־כֵּן לִנְדָה הָיְתָה
 All those who glorified her scorn her, כָּל־מְכַבְּדֶיהָ הִזְלִילוּהָ
 for they have seen her degradation. כִּי־רָאוּ עֲרוּתָהּ
 She, too, is sorrowful, גַּם־הִיא נֹאנָחָה
 and has turned backward, וַתִּשָּׁב אָחֹר:
 (humiliated and ashamed).
 9. Her defilement is at her hem, ט. טָמְאַתָּה בְּשׁוּלֶיהָ
 she was not mindful of her end— לֹא זָכְרָה אַחֲרִיתָהּ
 so she plummeted astonishingly, וַתִּתְרַד פְּלֵאִים
 with no one to console her. אִין מְנַחֵם לָהּ

as it is written, "Her oppressors have become elevated." Onkelos ignored the advice, converted to Judaism, and composed the authoritative Aramaic translation of the Bible, "Targum Onkelos." (Gitin, 56:b.)

⁵ This refers to The Divine Presence, which left *Tzion* to accompany the exiles. This did not occur, however, until the young children were taken captive, as stated in v.5. It is in their pure, innocent company that the Shechinah resides. (Midrash.)

- Adonoy look at my suffering,
for the enemy has gone to excess.
10. The oppressor extended his hand
over all her treasures,⁶
as she witnessed peoples entering her Sanctuary
concerning whom You commanded,
"Let them not enter your community."
11. All her people are groaning,
searching for bread.
They have given away their treasures for food
to keep their souls intact.
Look, Adonoy, and take notice
how I have become degraded.
12. May this not happen to you,
all who stray from the path.
Notice, see
if there is such agony like my agony,
that has been visited upon me
when Adonoy brought me to grief
on the day He vented His wrath.
13. From a lofty place He hurled fire into my bones,
crushing them.
He spread a net for my feet,
thrust me back, placed me in ruins,
[so that I] suffer throughout the day.
14. The yoke of my iniquities is recorded in His hand.
They have become interwoven,
and have encumbered my neck.
He has caused my strength to fail.
God has placed me
- רָאָה יְהוָה אֶת-עֲנִי
כִּי הִגְדִּיל אוֹיֵב:
י. יָדוּ פָּרֶשׁ צָר
עַל כָּל-מִחְמַדֶּיהָ
כִּי-רָאֲתָהּ גּוֹיִם כָּאוּ מִקְדָּשָׁהּ
אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתָהּ
לֹא-יָבֹאוּ בְּקִהְלָהּ:
יא. כָּל-עַמָּה נֹאנְחִים
מִבְּקָשִׁים לֶחֶם
נָתְנוּ מִחְמַדֶּיהֶם בְּאֶכֶל
לְהַשְׁכִּיב נַפְשָׁם
רָאָה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָהּ
כִּי הִיִּיתִי זוֹלָלָה:
יב. לֹא אֵלֶיכֶם
כָּל-עֲבָרֵי דָרְךָ
הִבִּיטוּ וּרְאוּ
אִם-יֵשׁ מִכְאוֹב כְּמִכְאוֹבִי
אֲשֶׁר עוֹלָל לִי
אֲשֶׁר הוֹגָה יְהוָה
בְּיוֹם חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ:
יג. מִמְּרוֹם שָׁלַח-אֵשׁ בְּעֲצָמָי
וַיִּרְדָּנָה
פָּרֶשׁ רֶשֶׁת לְרַגְלִי
הִשְׁכַּנִּי אַחֲזוֹר וְתִנְנִי שְׁמָמָה
כָּל-הַיּוֹם דָּוָה:
יד. נִשְׁקַד עַל פִּשְׁעֵי בִידוֹ
יִשְׁתַּרְגֵּן
עָלוּ עַל-צוּאָרִי
הִכְשִׁיל כַּחֲזִי
נִתְּנִי אֲדָנִי

⁶ Over the most desirable of all objects, the Torah scroll. The Ammonite and Moavite invaders were aware that the Torah prohibits them from intermarrying into the Jewish community, ever after conversion. Disregarding more valuable spoils, they preferred to loot and burn the Torah scrolls in which the prohibition is inscribed. (Rashi.)

- in the hands of those whom I cannot withstand.
15. God has trampled all my stalwarts in my midst,
He has proclaimed a gathering against me
to crush my young men.
[As with] a wine press, God has trodden
the maidens of the province of Yehudah.
16. For these I weep,
my eyes [lit. my eye, my eye] gush water,
for remote from me is a consoler
who can calm my soul.
My sons are devastated,
for the enemy has conquered.
17. *Tzion* spreads her arms,
there is no one to console her.
Adonoy has commanded, concerning Ya'akov,
that his oppressors surround him.⁷
Jerusalem has become despicable among them.
18. Adonoy is just,
for it is I who rejected His word.
Listen here, all you nations,
look at my torment;
my maidens and my young men
have gone into captivity.
19. I cried out to those who appeared to love me,
but they deceived me.⁸
My *kohanim* and elders expired in the city
while they searched for food for themselves,
to sustain their souls.
20. Adonoy, see how oppressed I am?
- טו. סֵלָה כָּל-אֲבִירַי | אֲדָנִי בְקָרְבִי
קָרָא עָלַי מוֹעֵד
לְשֹׁבוֹר בְּחוּרַי
גַּת דֶּבֶר אֲדָנִי
לְבַחֲוֹלַת בַּת-יְהוּדָה:
טז. עַל-אֵלֶּה | אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיָה
עֵינַי | עֵינַי יִרְדּוּ מַיִם
כִּי-רָחֵק מִמֶּנִּי מְנַחֵם
מְשִׁיב נֶפְשִׁי
הָיוּ בְנֵי שׁוֹמְמִים
כִּי גִבֹר אוֹיֵב:
יז. פָּרְשָׁה צִיּוֹן בְּיָדֶיהָ
אֵין מְנַחֵם לָהּ
צִוָּה יְהוָה לְעַקֹּב
סָבִיבוּ צָרָיו
הֵיטָה יְרוּשָׁלַם לַנִּדָּה בְּיָדֵיהֶם:
יח. צִדִּיק הוּא יְהוָה
כִּי פִיהוּ מְרִיתִי
שָׁמְעוּ-נָא כָל-הָעַמִּים
וּרְאוּ מִכָּאֲבִי
בַּחֲוֹלָתִי וּבְחוּרַי
הִלְכוּ בַשָּׁבִי:
יט. קָרָאתִי לַמֵּאֲהָבִי
הִמָּה רַמּוֹנִי
כָּהֲנִי וְזִקְנֵי בְעִיר גּוֹעִו
כִּי-בִקְשׁוּ אֶכֶל לָמוֹ
וְשִׁיבוּ אֶת-נַפְשָׁם:
כ. רְאֵה יְהוָה כִּי-צָר-לִי

⁷ When the Jews settled in the diaspora, their enemies settled nearby and taunted and attacked them. (Rashi.)

⁸ The Ishmaelites, who caused many painful deaths by offering the famished captives what seemed to be food and drink. But the food was extremely pungent to the taste, and the flasks held nothing but foul air. When the food increased their thirst, they pressed the flasks to their mouths, and expired from the sudden intake of the foul air. (Rashi.)

My gut has shriveled, my heart is twisting inside me,
because of my rebelliousness.
Outside, the sword brings bereavement,
within, it is like death.

21. They have heard how I groan,
and no one consoles me;
all my enemies have heard of my calamity,
and rejoiced,
for it is Your doing.⁹

Bring the day that You proclaimed,
and let them resemble me.

22. Let all their evil come before You,
and do, to them, what You have done to me
for all my iniquity,
for I groan much, and my heart aches.

מִצֵּי חֲמֹרָם וְנִהְפָּךְ לִבִּי בְקִרְבִּי
כִּי מָרוּ מְרִיתִי
מִחוּץ שְׂפָלָה־חָרֵב
בְּבֵית פְּמוֹת:
כא. שָׁמְעוּ כִּי נִאֲנַחָה אָנִי
אֵין מְנַחֵם לִי
כָּל־אֹיְבֵי שָׁמְעוּ רַעְתִּי
שִׂשׂוּ
כִּי אַתָּה עָשִׂיתָ
הַבְּאוֹת יוֹם־קִרְיָאתָ
וַיִּהְיוּ כְּמִנִּי:
כב. תָּבֹא כָּל־רָעָתָם לִפְנֶיךָ
וְעוֹלָל לָמוּ בְּאֶשֶׁר עוֹלָלְתָּ לִי
עַל כָּל־פְּשָׁעֵי
כִּי־רַבּוֹת אֲנֻחִי וְלִבִּי דוֹגִי:

Chapter 2 פרק ב

1. How can it be
that God, in his wrath, has cast a gloom
upon the city of Tzion,
that He flung from heaven to earth
the glory of Israel,
and did not remember His footstool¹⁰
on the day of His wrath?
2. God swallowed up mercilessly
every residence of Ya'akov.
He smashed, in His fury,
the fortifications of the province of Yehudah,
razing them to the ground.

א. אֵיכָה
יַעֲיֵב בְּאַפּוֹ | אֲדֹנָי
אֶת־בֵּית־צִיּוֹן
הַשְׁלִיךְ מִשָּׁמַיִם אֶרֶץ
תְּפֹאֶרֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְלֹא־זָכַר הַדָּם־רִגְלָיו
בְּיוֹם אָפוֹ:
ב. בָּלַע אֲדֹנָי וְלֹא חָמַל
אֶת כָּל־נְאוֹת יַעֲקֹב
הָרָס בְּעִבְרָתוֹ
מִבְצָרֵי בִתְיָהוּדָה
הִגִּיעַ לָאָרֶץ

⁹ You engendered their hatred by prohibiting me from dining or intermarrying with them. If you had permitted it, they would take pity on their own family members. (Rashi.)

¹⁰ The Temple. (Rashi.)

- He desecrated the kingdom and its princes.¹¹ חָלַל מַמְלָכָה וְשָׂרֶיהָ:
3. He tore down, in his wrath, ג. גָּדַע בְּחִירֵי־אֵף
all the power [lit. horn] of Israel. כָּל קֶרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל
He withheld His right arm הָשִׁיב אֲחוֹר יְמִינוֹ
in the face of the enemy. מִפְּנֵי אוֹיֵב
He ignited Ya'akov like a blazing flame וַיִּבְעַר בְּיַעֲקֹב כְּאֵשׁ לֹהֶבֶת
which consumes on every side. אֲכָלָה סָבִיב:
4. He arched His bow like an enemy, ד. דָּרַךְ קִשְׁאוֹ כְּאוֹיֵב
set His right arm like an oppressor, נָצַב יְמִינוֹ כְּצָר
and slew everyone that was a delight to behold. וַיַּהַרֵּג כָּל מְחַמְדֵּי־עֵינַיִן
In the tent of the city of *Tzion* בְּאֹהֶל בֵּת־צִיּוֹן
He poured His fury like fire. שָׁפַךְ כְּאֵשׁ חֲמָתוֹ:
5. God was like an enemy— ה. הָיָה אֱדֹנָי | כְּאוֹיֵב
He swallowed up Israel, בָּלַע יִשְׂרָאֵל
He swallowed up all her palaces, בָּלַע כָּל־אַרְמְנוֹתֶיהָ
He destroyed its fortifications. שָׁחַת מִבְצָרֶיהָ
He magnified, in the community of Yehudah, וַיִּרְבֵּב בְּבֵית־יְהוּדָה
suffering and lamentation. תַּאֲנִיָּה וְאֲנָהִי:
6. He cut down His dwelling place like a garden, ו. וַיַּחַמֵּס כַּגֵּן שְׁכוֹ
He destroyed His place of communion,¹² שָׁחַת מַעֲדוֹ
Adonoy caused to be forgotten in *Tzion* שָׁכַח יְהוָה | בְּצִיּוֹן
the Festivals and Shabbos. מוֹעֵד וּשְׁבֹת
He scorned, in the fury of His wrath, וַיִּנְאֹץ בְּזַעַם־אָפוֹ
the king and the *kohein*. מֶלֶךְ וְכֹהֵן:
7. God abandoned His altar, ז. זָנַח אֱדֹנָי | מִזְבְּחוֹ
nullified His Sanctuary, נָאֵר מִקְדָּשׁוֹ
delivered, into the enemy's hand, הִסְגִּיר בְּיַד־אוֹיֵב
the walls of its palaces. חֻמַּת אֲרַמְנוֹתֶיהָ
They sounded a shout, in the House of Adonoy, קוֹל גִּתְנוּ בְּבֵית־יְהוָה
like that of a festival day. כְּיוֹם מוֹעֵד:

¹¹ The Israelites, entitled the "kingdom of priests" [Shemos, 19:6] (Rashi.)

¹² The supremely holy, innermost. *Kodesh Kodashim* chamber of the Temple, set aside for communion with God [Shemos, 25:22] (Rashi.)

8. Adonoy determined to destroy
the wall of the city of *Tzion*.
He set the course [of judgement],
and did not withdraw His hand from destroying.
He caused the fence and the wall to mourn
they were joined in misery.
9. Her gates sank into the ground,¹³
He demolished and shattered her bolts.
Her king and nobles are among the Gentiles,
without guidance.
Her prophets, also,
have not found vision from Adonoy.
10. They sit silently on the ground,
the elders of the city of *Tzion*.
they lift the dust to their heads,
gird themselves with sackcloth.
they lower their heads to the ground,
the maidens of Jerusalem.
11. My eyes are consumed with tears,
my gut is shrivelled,
my liver has spilled to the ground,
over the disintegration of my people,
when infants and nursing babies faint
in the streets of the city.
12. To their mothers they say,
'Where's grain [bread] and wine?',
as they lie, passed out like corpses,
in the streets of the city,
when their soul is poured out
- ח. חשב יהוה | להשחית
חומת בתי ציון
נִטָּה לוֹ
לֹא־הִשִּׁיב יָדוֹ מִבִּלְעַד
וַיֹּאבֶל־חַל וְחֹמָה
יַחְדָּו אִמְלְלוּ:
ט. שָׁבְעוּ בָאָרֶץ שַׁעֲרֶיהָ
אֶבֶד וְשֹׁבֵר בְּרִיחֶיהָ
מִלִּפְנֵי וְשָׂרֶיהָ בְּגוֹיִם
אֵין תוֹרָה
גַּם־נְבִיאֶיהָ
לֹא מָצְאוּ חֲזוֹן מִיְהוָה:
י. יֵשְׁבוּ לָאָרֶץ יְדָמוּ
וְקָנְי בִתְצִיּוֹן
הֶעֱלוּ עָפָר עַל־רֹאשָׁם
תָּגְרוּ שָׁקִים
הוֹרִידוּ לָאָרֶץ רֹאשָׁן
בְּחֹלֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם:
יא. כָּלוּ בְדַמְעוֹת עֵינַי
תִּמְרָמְרוּ מִעֵי
וְשִׁפּוֹד לָאָרֶץ כִּבְדִּי
עַל־שֹׁבֵר בֵּת־עַמִּי
בַּעֲטָף עוֹלָל וְיוֹגָם
בְּרַחֲכוֹת קִרְיָה:
יב. לֹא־מָתָם יְאֻמְרוּ
אֵיךְ דָּגָן וְיַיִן
בְּהִתְעַשְׂפָם בְּחָלָל
בְּרַחֲכוֹת עִיר
בְּהִשְׁתַּפֵּד נַפְשָׁם

¹³ And were thereby preserved from falling into the hands of the heathen attackers. They were worthy of this because, when the *Bais Hamikdash* was dedicated by King Solomon, they opened to admit the sacred Ark. Or, because they were built by King David. (Rashi, from Midrash.) At the final redemption, they will be retrieved and restored to their place at the entrance to the *Bais Hamikdash*.

- in their mothers' laps. אֶל-חֵיק אִמָּתָם:
 13. What testimony can I offer you, יג. מָה-אֶעֱיֵדְךָ
 to what can I compare you, city of Jerusalem? מָה אֲדַמֶּה-לָּךְ הַבֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
 to what can I liken you to console you, מָה אֲשׁוּה-לָּךְ וְאֶנְחֶמְךָ
 O maiden, city of Tzion? בְּתוּלַת בַּת-צִיּוֹן
 For your disintegration is as immense as the sea— כִּי-גָדוֹל כַּיָּם שִׁבְרֶךָ
 who can heal you? מִי יִרְפָּא-לָּךְ:
 14. Your prophets envisioned, for you, יד. נְבִיאֶיךָ חָזוּ לָךְ
 falsehood and stupidity, שְׁוֹא וְחַפְל
 and did not expose your transgressions, וְלֹא-גִלּוּ עֲלֵי-עֲוֹנֶךָ
 to bring you back from your waywardness. לְהָשִׁיב שְׁבוּתֶךָ
 They envisioned, for you, וַיַּחֲזוּ לָךְ
 prophecies of falsehood and vanity. מִשְׁאֲוֹת שְׁוֹא וּמַדְוִיחִם:
 15. They clap their hands over you— טו. סָפְקוּ עָלֶיךָ כַּפֵּי־ם
 all those who travel along the way; כָּל-עֹבְרֵי דֶרֶךְ
 they hiss and shake their heads שָׁרְקוּ וַיִּנָּעוּ רִאשֵׁם
 over the city of Jerusalem. עַל-בֵּת יְרוּשָׁלַם
 Is this the city of which it was said, הֲזֹאת הָעִיר שֶׁיֵּאמְרוּ
 "The perfection of beauty, delight¹⁴ of all the earth?" קָלִילַת יָפִי מְשׁוֹשׁ לְכָל-הָאָרֶץ:
 16. They opened their mouths wide concerning you— טז. פָּצוּ עָלֶיךָ פִּיהֶם
 all your enemies— כָּל-אֹיְבֶיךָ
 they whistled, gnashed their teeth, and exclaimed, שָׁרְקוּ וַיַּחֲרֹקוּ-שֹׁן אֲמָרוּ
 "We swallowed them up? בָּלַעְנוּ
 This is precisely the day we hoped for! אֵךְ זֶה הַיּוֹם שֶׁקִּוִּינָהוּ
 We've experienced it! We've seen it!" מִצָּאָנוּ רְאִינוּ:
 17. God acted as planned. יז. עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר זָמַם
 He fulfilled His word בָּצַע אֲמָרְתּוֹ
 as decreed in the days of old¹⁵— אֲשֶׁר צִוָּה מִימֵי-לָדָם
 He destroyed without pity הָרַס וְלֹא חָמַל

¹⁴ Business accounting, often distressing, was not permitted in Jerusalem, but was conducted in special offices outside the city proper (Midrash.)

¹⁵ In the Torah, which warns, "I shall punish you additionally sevenfold . . ." [Vayikra, 26:19] (Rashi.)

He gave joy to the enemy concerning you,
and enhanced the power of your oppressors.

18. Their hearts cried out to God.

O Rampart of the city of *Tzion*,
pour forth a river of tears day and night.

Allow yourself no respite,
nor the pupil of your eye silence.

19. Rise, cry in the night, when the watches begin,
pour your heart out, like water, before God.

Lift up your hands to Him
for the souls of your infants,
faint from starvation at the head of every street.

20. Adonoy, look, notice
upon whom you have visited this,
when women devour their own offspring,
infants who were lovingly attended.¹⁶

When in the Sanctuary of God, was murdered¹⁷—
a *kohein* and prophet.

21. On the ground, in the streets they lie,
young and old.

My maidens and youths have fallen by the sword.
You killed, on the day of Your wrath,
you slaughtered mercilessly.

22. You summoned, as if to a festive day,
my surrounding neighbors.¹⁸

There was no one, on the day of Adonoy's wrath,
who found refuge or survived.

וַיִּשְׂמַח עֲלֶיךָ אוֹיֵב

הָרִים קֶרֶן צָרֶיךָ:

יח. צָעַק לָבָם אֶל־אֲדֹנָי

חֻמַּת בִּתְצִיּוֹן

הוֹרִידִי בִּנְחַל דְּמָעָה יוֹמָם וָלַיְלָה

אֶל־תַּתְּנִי פִּוְגַת לֶךְ

אֶל־תִּדְּם בִּתְעִינָה:

יט. קוּמִי | רִנֵּי בַלַּיְלָה לְרֹאשׁ אֲשַׁמְרוֹחַ

שִׁפְכִי כַמַּיִם לְגֹךְ נֶכַח פְּנֵי אֲדֹנָי

שְׂאִי אֱלֹיו בְּפִיךָ

עַל־נַפְשׁ עוֹלָלֶיךָ

הָעֲטוּפִים בְּרָעַב בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת:

כ. רֵאֵה יְהוָה וְהִבִּיטָה

לְמִי עוֹלָלָתָ כֹּהֵ

אִם־תֹּאכְלֶנָּה נָשִׁים פְּרִים

עַל־לִי טַפִּיִּים

אִם־יִהְיֶה בְּמִקְדָּשׁ אֲדֹנָי

כֹּהֵן וְנָבִיא:

כא. שָׁכְבוּ לָאָרֶץ חֻצוֹת

נָעַר וְזָקֵן

בְּחֻלָּתִי וּבְחֹרֵי נַפְלֵי בְּחָרֵב

הִרְגָתָ בְּיוֹם אֶפְדָּ

טַבַּחְתָּ לֹא חָמַלְתָּ:

כב. תִּקְרָא כְיוֹם מוֹעֵד

מִגּוּרֵי מִסְכֵּיב

וְלֹא הָיָה בְּיוֹם אֶף־יְהוָה

פָּלִיט וְשָׂרִיד

¹⁶ Another interpretation: "Children of handbreadths." A mother measured her child each day by handbreadths. Whenever he grew, she donated his additional weight in gold to the Temple. In the end, she devoured him. (Rashi, from Midrash.)

¹⁷ This part of the passage is God's reply; 'Your suffering is deserved because the *Kohein* and prophet Zechariah, son of Yehoyada, was murdered in the Temple courtyard for admonishing the idolators. [Divrei Hayanim 2, 24:20.] (Rashi.)

¹⁸ To destroy me (Rashi.)

Those whom I attended lovingly and reared,
my enemy has annihilated.

אֲשֶׁר־טַפַּחְתִּי וְרַב־יָחֵי
אֹיְבִי כָלָם:

Chapter 3 פרק ג

1. I am the man¹⁹ who has seen torment,²⁰
by the rod of His fury.
2. He drove me, led me on, into total darkness.
3. At me alone, He repeatedly swings His hand,
throughout the day.
4. He rotted my flesh and skin, smashed my bones.
5. He constructed, against me,
encircling me with gall and bitter plants.
6. He seated me in gloom like the dead of the world.
7. He fenced me in and I cannot go out,
He chained me heavily.
8. Even when I cry out and implore,
He represses my prayer.
9. He blockaded my roads with stone,
He made my paths crooked.
10. He is a bear lying in wait for me,
a stealthy lion.
11. He spread thorns across my roads,
He made me hurdle them. He devastated me.
12. He arched His bow,
and positioned me as a target for the arrow.
13. He aimed
the arrows of His quiver into my kidneys.
14. I was ridiculed by all my people,

א. אֲנִי הַגֶּבֶר רָאָה עָוִי
בְּשִׁבְטֵי עֲבָרָתוֹ:
ב. אוֹתִי נָהַג וַיִּלְךָ חֹשֶׁךְ וְלֹא־אֹרֶךְ:
ג. אֵיךְ בִּי יִשָּׁב יַהֲפֹךְ יָדוֹ
כָּל־הַיּוֹם:
ד. בָּלָה בְּשָׁרִי וְעוֹרִי שִׁבַּר עֲצָמוֹתַי:
ה. בָּנָה עָלַי
וַיִּקַּף רֹאשׁ וַתִּלְאַה:
ו. בְּמַחְשָׁכִים הוֹשִׁיבָנִי כְּמֵת עוֹלָם:
ז. גָּדַר בְּעֵדִי וְלֹא אֵצֶא
הַכְּבִיד נִחַשְׁתִּי:
ח. גַּם כִּי אֶזְעַק וְאֶשׁוּעַ
שָׁתָם תַּפְלִיתִי:
ט. גָּדַר דְּרָכִי בְּגִזִּית
נִחַיְבֹתִי עוֹהָה:
י. דָּב אֲרֹב הוּא לִי
אֲרִי בְּמַסְתָּרִים:
יא. דְּרָכִי סוֹדָר
וַיַּפְשְׁחֵנִי שְׁמִנִי שׁוֹמֵם:
יב. דִּרְגָּה קִשְׁתּוֹ
וַיַּצִּיבֵנִי כְּמִטְרָא לַחֵץ:
יג. הִבִּיא
בְּכֻלֵּי־יָחִי בְּנֵי אִשְׁפָּתוֹ:
יד. הִיִּיתִי שֶׁחָק לְכָל־עַמִּי

¹⁹ The other prophets merely prophesied that there would be torment—I experienced it. (Rashi.)

²⁰ The twenty-two verses in chapter 1, 2, and 4 follow the order of the alphabet, verse 1 opening with the letter א, verse 2 with the letter ב, etc., through נ. This reflects the extent of the people's iniquity, which encompassed the entire Torah, written in the twenty-two symbols of the alphabet. (Sanhedrin, 104:a.) Our chapter, which laments the prophet's personal suffering as well as that of the nation, consists of sixty-six verses, with three sub-verses devoted to each letter of the alphabet. (Rashi.)

- the subject of their satirical songs נגנינתם
throughout the day. כל-היום:
15. He satiated me with bitterness,²¹ טו. השביעני במרורים
glutted me with bitter plants. הרונני לענה:
16. He ground my teeth on pebblestones,²² טז. ויגרס בַּחֲצֵץ שֵׁנִי
He made me grovel in the dust. הקפישני בַּאֲפֹר:
17. My soul despaired of peace,²³ יז. וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלֹום נַפְשִׁי
I have forgotten goodness. נִשְׁיִחִי טוֹבָה:
18. I thought that my world was ruined, יח. וְאָמַר אֶבֶד נִצְחִי
my hope from Adonoy. וַתִּחַלְתִּי מִיְהוָה:
19. Remember my torment and my lament, יט. זְכַר-עֲנִי וּמְרוּדִי
the bitter plants and the gall. לַעֲנָה וְרָאשׁ:
20. When remembering, כ. זְכוֹר תִּזְכֹּר
my soul is utterly dejected. וַתִּשְׁוַח עָלַי נַפְשִׁי:
21. Still, I take this to heart, כא. זֹאת אֲשִׁיב אֶל-לִבִּי
and, therefore, continue to hope: עַל-כֵּן אוֹחִיל:
22. By the grace of Adonoy we have not perished, כב. חֲסֵדִי יְהוָה כִּי לֹא-תָמוּנוּ
for His compassion is not ended. כִּי לֹא-כָלוּ רַחֲמָיו:
23. Each morning refreshed, כג. חֲדָשִׁים לִבְקָרִים
Your faithfulness is immense. רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ:
24. 'Adonoy is my portion,' my soul declares,²⁴ כד. חֲלָקִי יְהוָה אֲמַרָה נַפְשִׁי

²¹ This alludes to the bitter herbs eaten at the Passover *seder*, to commemorate the Exodus from the bitter persecution of Egypt. "Glutted me with bitter plants" refers to the destruction of the Temple and the exile. Indeed, the ninth of Av, the anniversary of the destruction of the Temple, and the first *seder* night always fall on the same day of the week. The anguish of a profound loss is always heightened by the memory of the joy that preceded it. (Midrash, Pesichta D'eichah Rabasi, 18, Yefeh Anaf. Cf. Rema to Orach Chaim, 476:2. Also, Seder Kinot, "When I went out of Egypt—when I went out of Jerusalem.")

²² God commanded the prophet Yechezkel to prepare a kneading tray to carry into captivity (Yechezkel, 12:3,) and to instruct the people to follow suit. The people, however merely scoffed. When they were eventually exiled, they were forced to knead their dough in small holes dug in the ground. Pebblestones fell into the mixture, causing the grinding of their teeth. (Rashi.)

²³ שלום, "Peace" is one of the names of God. Because I despaired of Godliness, I forfeited goodness. (Lechem Dim'ah.)

²⁴ A great king, accompanied by his ministers and other officials, visited one of his provinces, and the provincial residents invited various members of the king's retinue to visit with them. The wisest among them, however, declared that he would pay attention only to the king himself, as the others might be replaced, but the king was indispensable. Similarly, the idolaters worship the heavenly bodies, or other creatures who minister God's will, but Israel declares "God is my portion," proclaiming His absolute unity by reciting the Shema twice daily. (Midrash, 3:8.)

- I therefore hope to Him. על־כֵּן אוֹחִיל לוֹ:
 25. Adonoy is good to those who hope to Him, כה. טוֹב יִהְיֶה לְקוֹי
 to the soul which searches for Him. לְנַפֵּשׁ תִּדְרֹשׁנוּ:
 26. It is good to hope, in stillness, כו. טוֹב וַיִּחִיל וְדוֹמָם
 for Adonoy's deliverance. לְתַשׁוּעַת יְהוָה:
 27. It is good for man כז. טוֹב לְאָדָם
 to bear a yoke during his youth. כִּי־יֵשֶׁא עַל בְּנוֹעָרָיו:
 28. Let him stay alone and wait, כח. יֵשֶׁב בְּדָד וַיֵּדֶם
 for He [God] has cast it upon him.²⁵ כִּי נָטַל עָלָיו:
 29. Let him place his mouth in the dust, כט. יִתֵּן בְּעַפָּר פִּיהוּ
 perhaps there is yet hope. אוֹלֵי יֵשׁ תִּקְוָה:
 30. Let him proffer his cheek to his assailant, ל. יִתֵּן לְמַכֵּהוּ לָחִי
 let him be satiated with humiliation. יִשְׂבֹּעַ בְּחִרְפָּה:
 31. For God does not forsake forever. לא. כִּי לֹא יִנָּחַ לְעוֹלָם אֲדוֹנֵי:
 32. Rather, should he [man] cause grief, לב. כִּי אִם־הוֹגָה
 then He [God] is compassionate, וְרַחֵם
 in accordance with His immense grace. כָּרַב חֲסָדָיו:
 33. For He does not torment willfully, לג. כִּי לֹא עֲנָה מְלָבוּ
 nor cause men grief. וַיִּגָּה בְּנִי־אִישׁ:
 34. By crushing underfoot לד. לְדַכָּא תַחַת רֶגְלָיו
 all the captives on earth. כָּל אֲסִירֵי אֶרֶץ:
 35. Or through the miscarriage of a man's justice לה. לְהַטּוֹת מִשְׁפָּט־נָדָר
 before the Supreme Being. נִגְדַּר פָּנָי עָלְיוֹן:
 36. Or by aggrieving a man in his dispute— לו. לְעִצְתָּ אָדָם בְּרִיבּוֹ
 God does not condone this. אֲדוֹנֵי לֹא רָאָה:
 37. Whosoever issued a declaration that took effect לז. מִי זֶה אָמַר וַתְּהִי
 when God did not command? אֲדוֹנֵי לֹא צִוָּה:
 38. That did not emanate from the Almighty— לח. מִפִּי עָלְיוֹן לֹא תֵצֵא
 whether harmful or beneficial? הַרְעוֹת וְהַטּוֹב:

²⁵ This follows Rashi's translation. Targum interprets, "until He removes it from him." Let him accept the suffering as a means of absolution, until He—God—removes the sin from him.

39. What should a living man bemoan?
A man over his sins.²⁶ לט. מה־יִתְאוֹנֵן אָדָם חַי
גָּבֵר עַל־חַטָּאָיו:
40. Let us examine our ways, scrutinize them,
and return to God. מ. נַחֲפֹשֶׁה דְרָכֵינוּ וְנַחֲלֹנָה
וְנָשׁוּבָה עַד־יְהוָה:
41. Let us uplift our hearts together with our hands,
to the Almighty in heaven. מא. נִשְׂאָ לִבֵּנוּ אֶל־כַּפָּיִם
אֶל־אֵל בְּשָׁמַיִם:
42. We have transgressed and rebelled,
and You have not forgiven. מב. נַחֲנוּ פְשָׁעֵנוּ וּמָרִינוּ
אַתָּה לֹא סָלַחְתָּ:
43. You have covered Yourself in wrath,
and pursued us. מג. סָכַוְתָה בְּאַף
וַתִּרְדָּפֵנוּ
You slew pitilessly. מ. הִרְגַּתָּ לֹא חֲמִלָה:
44. You have enveloped Yourself in the cloud,
so that no prayer would penetrate. מד. סָכַוְתָה בְּעָנָן לְךָ
מִעֲבוֹר תַּפְלָה:
45. You made us seem like spittle, abominable
among the nations. מה. סִחִי וּמֵאוֹס תִּשְׁמַנֵּנוּ
בְּקֶרֶב הָעַמִּים:
46. ²⁷They opened
their mouths wide concerning us—
all our enemies. מו. פָּצוּ
עֲלֵינוּ פִּיהֶם
כָּל־אֹיְבֵינוּ:
47. Terror, then the pit, were our lot,
ruin and disintegration. מז. פָּחַד וּפֶתַח הָיָה לָנוּ
הַשָּׁאֵת וְהַשְׁכָּר:
48. Rivers of water stream from my eye,
over the disintegration of my people. מח. פִּלְגֵי־מַיִם תִּרְדַּ עֵינִי
עַל־שֹׁכֵר בַּחֲעָמִי:
49. My eye flows copiously, and will not be stilled,
[it will flow] without pause— מט. עֵינִי נִגְרָה וְלֹא תִדְמָה
מֵאֵין הַפְּגוֹת:
50. Till Adonoy gazes intently and takes notice נ. עַד־יִשְׁקֹף וְיִרְא יְהוָה

²⁶ The oral vocalization here, קרי, is the plural חַטָּאִי, “his sins,” while the written text, קָחִיב, spells the singular חַטָּא, “his sin.” Both versions are relevant. A man’s single sinful act invariably leads to other transgressions. He should thus particularly bemoan the single, original catalyst, as well as the others which followed. (Lechem Dim’ah.)

²⁷ The opening letters of the verses in our chapter follow the order of the alphabet (see fn.1.) Accordingly, our verse (as well as v. 16, ch.2) should begin with the letter ע, which precedes the letter פ. Yet it begins with מ. This alludes to the spies sent by Moshe in the wilderness, who delivered a false, slanderous report concerning Eretz Yisrael, and dissuaded the people from entering the land. (Bamidbar, 13, 14.) The letter פ״ה symbolizes *peh*, the mouth, the letter ע״ן represents *ayin*, the eye. Since they mouthed what they had not seen, their mouths, פ preceded their eyes, ע. The report was delivered on the ninth of Av, foreshadowing the destruction of the Temple, which also occurred on that date, centuries later. Reflecting the spies’ report, Scripture also positions the פ before the ע. (Rashi from Sanhedrin, 104b.)

- from heaven. מַשְׁמַיִם:
51. My eye has made me ugly, sorrowing נא. עֵינִי עוֹלְלָה
over my soul, לַנַּפְשִׁי
- more than all the inhabitants of my city.^{28 29} מִכָּל בְּנוֹת עִירִי:
52. I have been constantly trapped like a bird, נב. צוֹד צְדוּנִי בַצֶּפֶר
by those who are my enemies without cause. אִיבֵי חֲנָם:
53. They bound my life to the dungeon, נג. צָמְתוּ בְּבוֹר חַיִּי
and cast stones upon me. וַיִּדְוֹ-אֶבֶן בִּי:
54. The waters rose over my head, נד. צְפוּ-מַיִם עַל-רֹאשִׁי
I thought, 'I am cut off!'. אֶמְרָתִי נִגְזְרָתִי:
55. Still, I cried out Your Name, Adonoy נה. קָרָאתִי שְׁמֶךָ יְהוָה
from the abysmal dungeon. מִבוֹר תַּחְתִּיּוֹת:
56. You have heard my voice. Do not shut Your ear נו. קוֹלִי שָׁמַעַתָּ אֶל-תַּעֲלֶם אָזְנְךָ
to my [appeal for] relief, to my prayer. לְרוּחֹתִי לְשׁוֹעֲתִי:
57. You came near on the day I called to You, נז. קָרַבְתָּ בְּיוֹם אֶקְרָאָךָ
You said, 'Have no fear.' אֶמְרָתָּ אֶל-תִּירָא:
58. You fought, O God, the battles of my soul, נח. רָבַתְּ אֲדוֹנֵי רִיבֵי נַפְשִׁי
You redeemed my life. גָּאַלְתָּ חַיִּי:
59. You have seen, Adonoy, how aggrieved I am—נט. רָאִיתָה יְהוָה עֲוֹנֹתַי
administer justice for me. שִׁפְטָה מִשְׁפָּטִי:
60. You have seen all their vindictiveness, ס. רָאִיתָה כָּל-זִקְמָתָם
all their plots against me. כָּל-מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם לִי:
61. You have heard their affronts, Adonoy סא. שָׁמַעַתָּ חֲרָפָתָם יְהוָה
all their [insulting] thoughts concerning me. כָּל-מַחֲשַׁבְתָּם עָלַי:
62. My opponents' conversation, סב. שִׁפְתֵי קָמִי
their unspoken thoughts, וְהִגִּיוֹנָם
are about me, throughout the day. עָלַי כָּל-הַיּוֹם:
63. Observe them as they sit or rise—סג. שְׁכַתָּם וְקִימָתָם הַבֵּיטָה

²⁸ Yirmiyahu belonged to a family of *Kohanim*, chosen to serve in the Temple. When it was destroyed, their anguish was keener than that of the other families in the city. (Rashi.)

²⁹ Midrash interprets, '[Only I remained] of all the inhabitants of my city.' R' Shimon, son of Gamliel, said, 'There were five hundred schools in the city of Betar, the least of which numbered three hundred children.... The enemies wrapped each of them in his scroll and burned them. Only I remained, and I pronounce, over myself, "My eye has made me ugly in sorrowing over my soul, of all the inhabitants of my city." (Midrash, 3.)

- I am the subject of their satirical songs. **אָנִי מִנְגִּינָתָם:**
 64. Inflict punishment on them, Adonoy **סד. תְּשִׁיב לָהֶם גְּמוּל יְהוָה**
 as befits their deeds. **כַּמַּעֲשֵׂה יְדֵיהֶם:**
 65. Break their hearts, **סה. תִּתֵּן לָהֶם מִגֶּנֶת־לֵב**
 turn them into fools. **תַּאֲלֹתֶךָ לָהֶם:**
 66. Pursue wrathfully, annihilate them **סו. תִּרְדֹּף בָּאֵף וְתַשְׁמִידֵם**
 from under Adonoy's heavens.³⁰ **מִתַּחַת שָׁמַי יְהוָה:**

Chapter 4 פרק ד

1. How can it be that the golden glow has paled,³¹ **א. אֵיכָה יַעֲמֶה זָהָב**
 that the splendid jewel is altered?
 Sacred gems are spilled
 at the head of every street. **יִשָּׁנָא הַכֶּתֶם הַטּוֹב**
תִּשְׁתַּפֶּכְנָה אֲבִי־קֶדֶשׁ
בְּרֹאשׁ כָּל־חֻצוֹת:
 2. The cherished children of *Tzion*,³² **ב. בְּנֵי צִיּוֹן הַיְקָרִים**
 who were evaluated in golden currency—
 how can they be considered like flasks of clay,
 the potter's handiwork? **הַמְּסֻלָּאִים בַּפֶּזֶ**
אֵיכָה נִחָשְׁבוּ לִנְבִל־יָחָרֶשׁ
מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי יוֹצֵר:
 3. Even the serpent **ג. גַּם־תַּנִּינִים**
 bares its breast to nurse its young,
 yet the daughters of my people have become brutal,
 like the desert ostrich. **תִּלְצוּ שֵׁד הַיִּנְיָקוֹ גּוֹרִיהֶן**
בַּת־עַמִּי לֹאֲכֹזֵר
כַּיֶּעֱנִים בַּמִּדְבָּר:
 4. The tongue of the nursing infant pasted
 to its palate with thirst,
 babies pleaded for bread,
 but no one offered it to them. **ד. דָּבָק לְשׁוֹן יוֹנֵק**
אֶל־חִכּוֹ בַּצִּמָּא
עוֹלָלִים שָׁאֲלוּ לֶחֶם
פֶּדֶשׁ אֵין לָהֶם:
 5. Those who feasted on delicacies **ה. הָאֲכָלִים לְמַעַד־נִים**
 were ravaged in the streets, **נִשְׁמּוּ בַּחֻצוֹת**

³⁰ This alludes to Israel's arch oppressor, Amalek, of whom Moshe stated, "For I shall obliterate the memory of Amalek 'from under the heavens,'" (Shemos, 17:14.) (Midrash.)

³¹ This is Yirmiyahu's elegy in memory of the slain king, Yoshiyahu (Divrei Hayamim 2, 35:25.) The "golden glow" was the saintly monarch's glowing countenance, the "sacred gems" his blood which spilled when enemy archers felled him with a fusillade of arrows. (Rashi.)

³² The Jerusalemmites. How were they cherished? When outsiders married Jerusalemmites, they would pay them their weight in gold. (Midrash.)

- those raised on richly colored brocade
embraced the dunghoops.
6. My people's transgressions surpassed
the sins of S'dom,³³
which was instantaneously overturned,
untouched by [human] hands.
7. Her nazirites were more pristine than snow,
more lustrous than milk.
Those who appeared redder than pearls,
who were hewn like sapphire—
8. Have become blacker than charcoal in appearance,
are unrecognizable in the streets.
Their skin is shrivelled on their bones,
having become dry as wood.
9. Those who died by the sword were at an advantage
over those who died of starvation,
for they dripped, with burst bellies,
from [eating] the produce of the fields.
10. The hands of merciful women
cooked their children.
They became their food,
when my people disintegrated.
11. God spent His wrath,
poured out His rage.
He ignited a blaze in *Tzion*,
and it consumed its foundations.³⁴

הָאֲמִינִים עָלֵי חוֹלָע
חִבְּקוּ אֲשֵׁפּוֹת:
ו. וַיִּגְדֹּל עֲוֹן בֵּית-עַמִּי
מִחַטְאֵת סֹדֶם
הַהִפּוּכָה כְּמוֹ-דָּגַע
וְלֹא-תָלוּ בָּהּ יָדִים:
ז. וְכֹה נְזִירֶיהָ מִשֶּׁלֶג
צָחוּ מִחֵלֶב
אֲדָמוּ עֵצִים מִפְּנִינִים
סָפִיר גִּזְרָתָם:
ח. חֶשֶׁךְ מִשְׁחֹר תֵּאָדָם
לֹא נִכְרוּ בַּחוּצוֹת
צִפְרָ עוֹרָם עַל-עֲצָמָם
יָבֵשׁ הָיָה כַּעֵץ:
ט. טוֹבִים הָיוּ חֲלִי-חֶרֶב
מִחֲלִי רָעָב
שָׁהֵם יִזְבּוּ מִדִּקְרִים
מִתְנוּבוֹת שָׂדֵי:
י. יָדֵי נָשִׁים רַחֲמָנוּת
בָּשְׁלוּ יִלְדֵיהֶן
הָיוּ לְכָרוֹת לָמוֹ
בָּשָׁבַר בֵּית-עַמִּי:
יא. כָּלָה יְהוָה אֶת-חֲמָתוֹ
שָׁפַךְ חֲרוֹן אַפּוֹ
וַיִּצְתֶּ-אֵשׁ בְּצִיּוֹן
וַתֹּאכַל יְסֻדֶּיהָ:

³³ Concerning S'dom, Scripture states. "...her sin is extremely grave" (Bereishis, 18:20,) concerning Yehudah and Binyamin, "...the iniquity of the house of Israel and Yehudah is extremely, extremely great." (Yechezkel, 9:9.) (Midrash.)

³⁴ "Song of Asaf, the nations have invaded your heritage..." (Tehilim, 79:1.) 'Song,' not dirge, or lament? This is compared to a king who built an elaborate wedding canopy for his son. When the prince became corrupt, his father destroyed the canopy, whereupon the prince's tutor burst into song. When asked why, he replied that he was joyful that the king had spent his fury against the canopy rather than the prince himself. Similarly, Asaf sang because God spent his fury against the *Bais Hamikdash* rather than the Jewish people themselves. "God spent His wrath...He ignited a blaze in *Tzion*, and it consumed its foundations"—thereby sparing the Jewish people themselves. (Midrash, 4, Rashi to Tehilim, 79:1.)

12. The kings of the earth did not believe
nor did all the residents of the world [believe]
that an oppressor or an enemy could enter
the portals of Jerusalem.

13. For the sins of her false prophets,
the transgressions of her *kohanim*,
who spilled, within her, the blood of the righteous.

14. The blind slithered in the streets,
filthied with blood,
so that no one could bear touching their garments.

15. "Get away, you are contaminated!"
they shouted at them.

Get away, get away, don't touch!",
for they were obscene and slithering.

They said, among the nations,
"They will no longer reside here."

16. In Adonoy's glaring anger, He dispersed them;
He will no longer pay attention to them,
because they did not venerate the *kohanim*,
nor oblige the elders.

17. We persisted in longingly eyeing
illusive reinforcements,³⁵
our yearning was for a nation
that would never come to our aid.

18. They lurked behind our footsteps,
so that we couldn't walk our streets,
[we felt that] our end was near,
our time was up, we were finished.

19. Our pursuers were swifter

יב. לֹא הֶאֱמִינוּ מַלְכֵי אֲרֶץ
כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי תְּהוֹמֹת
כִּי יָבֹא צָר וְאוֹיֵב
בְּשַׁעְרֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם:
יג. מִחַטָּאוֹת נְבִיאֶיהָ
עֲוֹנוֹת כֹּהֲנֶיהָ
הַשֹּׁפְכִים בְּקִרְבָּהּ דָּם צַדִּיקִים:
יד. נָעוּ עֲוֵרִים בְּחוֹצוֹת
וְנִגְאָלוּ בַדָּם
כֵּן לֹא יוּכְלוּ יִגְעוּ בְּלִבְשֵׁיהֶם:
טו. סִוְרוּ טֶמֶא
קָרְאוּ לָמוֹ
סִוְרוּ סִוְרוּ אֶל-תִּגְעוּ
כִּי נָצוּ גַם-נָעוּ
אָמְרוּ בְּגוֹיִם
לֹא יוֹסִפוּ לָגוֹר:
טז. פָּנֵי יְהוָה חִלְקָם
לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהִבְיטָם
פָּנֵי כֹהֲנִים לֹא נִשְׂאוּ
וְזִקְנִים לֹא תִנָּנוּ:
יז. עֲוִדֵינוֹ תִּכְלִינָה עֵינֵינוּ
אֶל-עֲזָרְתָנוּ הִקְל
בְּצַפִּיתָנוּ צָפִינוּ אֶל-גֹּי
לֹא יוֹשָׁע:
יח. צָדוּ צִעְדֵינוּ
מִלֶּכֶת בְּרַחֲבֵינוּ
קָרַב קִצְנוּ
מָלְאוּ יָמֵינוּ כִּי-בָא קִצְנוּ:
יט. קָלִים הָיוּ רֹדְפֵינוּ

³⁵ The Egyptian army. As they sailed to reinforce the Israelites, the Egyptian warriors noticed what appeared to be human remains in the water. They presumed that they were the remains of their ancestors, who had drowned while pursuing the Israelites. Thus reminded of the ancient enmity between the two nations, they returned to Egypt. (Rashi, from Midrash. Yirmiyahu, 37:7.)

- than the eagles in the skies.
 They hounded us on the hills,
 laid ambush for us in the wilderness.
20. The breath of our nostrils, Adonoy's anointed,³⁶
 was ensnared in their pitfalls,
 when we thought that under His shelter,
 we would survive among the nations.
21. Rejoice in gladness, city of Edom,³⁷
 residing in the land of Utz—
 unto you, as well, shall the come to pass,
 intoxicating you till you vomit.
22. You have been fully chastised for your sins,
 city of Tzion.
 He will never exile you again.
 He remembers your sins, city of Edom,
 your iniquity is exposed.

מִנְשָׁרֵי שָׁמַיִם
 עַל־הַהָרִים דָּלְקָנוּ
 בַּמִּדְבָּר אָרְבוּ לָנוּ:
 כ. רוּחַ אֲפִינוֹ מְשִׁיחַ יְהוָה
 נִלְכַּד בְּשַׁחֲתוֹתָם
 אֲשֶׁר אִמְרָנוּ בְּצִלּוֹ
 נִחְיָה בְּגוֹיִם:
 כא. שִׂישִׁי וְשִׂמְחִי בַת־אֱדוֹם
 יוֹשֶׁבֶת בְּאֶרֶץ עֻץ
 גַּם־עֲלֶיךָ תַעֲבֹר־פֹּסֶם
 תִּשְׁכָּרֵי וְתִתְעָרֵי:
 כב. תִּסְעֲוֹנָה
 בַּת־צִיּוֹן
 לֹא יוֹסִיף לְהַגְלוֹתְךָ
 פֶּקֶד עֲוֹנֶךָ בַת־אֱדוֹם
 גָּלָה עַל־חַטָּאתֶיךָ:

Chapter 5 פרק ה

1. God, remember what happened to us;
 look, take note of our degradation.
2. Our heritage was subverted to strangers,
 our homes to foreigners.
3. We have been orphaned, there is no father,
 our mothers are as widows.
4. We pay to drink our own water,
 our wood is acquired for a price.
5. We are hounded around our necks,³⁸
 we exhaust ourselves, but nothing remains for us.

א. זָכֹר יְהוָה מַה־הָיָה לָנוּ
 הַבִּיטָה וּרְאֵה אֶת־חַרְפֹּתֵנוּ:
 ב. נִחְלַתְנוּ נְהַפְכָה לְזָרִים
 בְּתֵינּוּ לְנֹכְרִים:
 ג. יְתוּמִים הָיִינוּ וְאֵין אָב
 אִמֹּתֵינוּ כְּאַלְמָנוֹת:
 ד. מִמֵּינֵנוּ בְּכֶסֶף שְׁתִּינּוּ
 עֲצֵינוּ בְּמַחֲרִיר יָבֹאוּ:
 ה. עַל צוּאֲרֵנוּ נִרְדָּפוּ
 יִגְעֲנוּ וְלֹא הוֹנַח לָנוּ:

³⁶ King Yoshiyahu. (Rashi. See fn.1)

³⁷ This is a prophetic reference to the Edomites' destruction of the second *Bais Hamikdosh* some five centuries later. Yirmihayu foresees their punishment, and the eventual return of the people of Israel, never to suffer exile again. (Rashi.)

³⁸ The hard labor is like a yoke around our necks. (Rashi.)

6. We extended a hand toward Egypt [for assistance,
toward Ashur, to satiate us with bread.
7. Our forefathers sinned, and are no longer—
we must bear the burden of their transgressions.
8. Slaves rule over us,
and there is no redeemer³⁹ from their clutches.
9. We gain our bread at the risk of our lives,
from the sword of the wilderness.
10. Our skin is inflamed like a furnace,
from burning hunger.
11. Matrons were ravished in *Tzion*,
maidens in the cities of *Yehudah*.
12. Noblemen were hung by the hands,
elders were accorded no reverence.
13. Youths were encumbered with millstones,
boys staggered with beams.
14. The elders vanished from the gates of justice,⁴⁰
young men from their halls of song.
15. Joy has disappeared from our hearts,
our dance has turned to grief.
16. The crown of our heads⁴¹ has fallen.
Woe to us, for we have sinned.
17. For this our hearts ached,
over these, our eyes were dulled—
18. Over Mount *Tzion* which was devastated,
foxes meandered across it.⁴²
- ו. מִצְרַיִם נָתַנוּ יָד
אֲשׁוּר לְשַׂבֵּעַ לָחֶם:
ז. אֲבוֹתֵינוּ חָטְאוּ וְאֵינָם
וְאֶנְחֵנוּ עֹנֵתֵיהֶם סָבְלָנוּ:
ח. עֲבָדִים מָשְׁלוּ בָנוּ
פֶּדְיָהּ אֵין מִיָּדָם:
ט. בְּנַפְשֵׁנוּ נִבְיֵא לְחַמְנוּ
מִפְּנֵי חֶרֶב הַמִּדְבָּר:
י. עוֹרֵנוּ כְּתֹנִיף נִכְמְרוּ
מִפְּנֵי זֶלְעָפוֹת רָעָב:
יא. נָשִׁים בְּצִיּוֹן עֲזָו
בְּתֹלַת בְּעָרֵי יְהוּדָה:
יב. שָׂרִים בְּיָדָם נִתְלוּ
פְּנֵי זְקֵנִים לֹא נִהְדָּרוּ:
יג. בַּחוּרִים טָחוּן נִשְׂאוּ
וּבָעָרִים בְּעֵץ כָּשְׁלוּ:
יד. זְקֵנִים מִשְׁעָר שְׁכָתוּ
בַּחוּרִים מִנְּגִינָתָם:
טו. שֹׁכֵת מִשּׁוֹשׁ לִבָּנוּ
נִהְפָּה לְאֶכָּל מַחֲוֹלָנוּ:
טז. נִפְלָה עֲטֶרֶת רֹאשֵׁנוּ
אֹי־נָא לָנוּ כִּי חָטְאנוּ:
יז. עַל-זֶה הֵיךְ דָּוָה לִבָּנוּ
עַל-אֵלֶּה חָשְׁכוּ עֵינֵינוּ:
יח. עַל הַר-צִיּוֹן שִׁשְׁמָם
שׁוֹעֲלִים הַלְכוּ-בּוֹ:

³⁹ To redeem us. Another interpretation: "Her oppressors have become elevated" (1:5) teaches that anyone who oppresses Israel rises to greatness (see fn. there.) Thus, when lowly slaves rule over us, they become global potentates, and there is no redeemer for anyone on earth from their clutches. (Lechem Dim'ah.)

⁴⁰ The Sanhedrin (Targum.)

⁴¹ The *Bais Hamikdash*.

⁴² When the Sages came upon the *Bais Hamikdash*, they noticed a fox leaving the area which had housed the supremely sacred, innermost *Kodesh Kodashim* chamber. The others wept, but R' Akiva chuckled. They wept "Over Mount *Tzion* which was devastated, foxes meandered across it." R' Akiva explained why he chuckled. Scripture compares the testimony of Uriah and Zechariah (Yeshayah, 8:2.) Why are the two compared? Uriah prophesied

19. Adonoy, You shall endure for all eternity,
Your throne throughout the generations;
20. Why, then, O Eternal, do You forget us,
abandon us through lengthy days?
21. Adonoy, return us to You
then we shall repent.⁴³
Rejuvenate our days as in early times.
22. For, although
You may have considered us contemptible,
You have already vented the utmost fury against us.
(Adonoy, God, return us to You,
then we shall repent.
Rejuvenate our days as in early times.⁴⁴)
- יט. אַתָּה יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם תִּשָּׁב
כִּסְאֶךָ לְדוֹר וָדוֹר:
כ. לָמָּה לִנְצַח תִּשְׁכַּחֲנוּ
תַּעֲזֹבֵנוּ לְאַרְךָ יָמִים:
כא. הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ
וְנִשְׁוֹבָה
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:
כב. כִּי אִם
מֵאִס מֵאֲסִתָּנוּ
קִצַּפְתָּ עָלֵינוּ עַד-מְאֹד:
(הַשִּׁיבֵנוּ יְהוָה | אֵלֶיךָ
וְנִשְׁוֹבָה
חֲדָשׁ יָמֵינוּ כְּקֶדֶם:)

that *Tzion* would be plowed under, Jerusalem and the Temple Mount turned into a heap of rubble. (Yirmiyahu, 26.) Zechariah foretold that the streets of Jerusalem would yet teem with young and old (Zechariah, 8:4.5.) The comparison teaches that the two prophecies are interdependent. 'I rejoiced,' R' Akiva concluded, 'because, if Uriah's prophecy of destruction has been fulfilled, then Zechariah's prophecy of redemption shall also be fulfilled.' 'Akiva,' the Sages exclaimed, 'you have consoled us. May you be consoled by the footsteps of the herald [of redemption.]' (Midrash, 5:19.)

⁴³ God appeals to the Jewish people to initiate the process of repentance, "Return to me...then I shall return to you" (Zechariah, 1:3.) But the people appeal to God to begin, "God, return us to You, then we shall repent." (Midrash.)

⁴⁴ In order to close on a note of consolation, Scripture repeats verse 21, with its message of repentance and rejuvenation. (Rashi.)

Preface to Esther

Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah? "I [God] shall conceal ("Haster astir") my face on that day . . ." [Devarim, 31:18]. (Chulin, 139:b).

The Book of Esther recounts the drama of the Purim miracle, detailing the intrigue which jeopardized the entire Jewish people, and the subsequent events which culminated in their redemption. The story unfolds in the city of Shushan, capital of Persia, during the hiatus between the destruction of the First Temple, and the construction of the second. It is told simply and directly, and may be summarized in a few sentences. The Persian King Achashverosh replaced Queen Vashti with Esther, cousin of Mordechai. Afterward, Haman rose to the position of Prime Minister and demanded that everyone prostrate themselves before him, but Mordechai refused to comply. This enraged Haman, and he promulgated a decree authorizing the massacre of all the Jews. Esther interceded with the king, and he ordered Haman's execution. A new decree was issued, empowering the Jews to annihilate all their enemies. They did so, Mordechai was appointed to Haman's position of power, and the anniversary of the Jewish victory was proclaimed as the Purim holiday.

Yet, for all its lucidity and clarity of presentation, Megillas Esther represents a notable departure from Scriptural narrative. For, of all of the Sacred literature concerned with Jewish history, the Book of Esther alone utterly neglects the role of Providence in the events it portrays, failing, altogether, to even mention the name of God.

Why does Scripture here omit the role of Providence, but include it in great detail throughout the remaining sacred writings? The classical commentaries explain: because of the distinction between the nature of the Purim miracle, and the miracles which preceded it, from the time of the Exodus and the revelation at Sinai, until the close of the era of the first Temple. Then, Providence revealed itself through the miracle. The Presence of God in mortal affairs was plainly evident. The Scriptural literature itself reflects this pattern of a visible Providence, and the effect of the Hand of God is clearly detailed throughout the five *chumashim* and the works of the prophets, ending with the destruction of the Temple. With the close of the Temple and prophetic eras, however, the age of the revealed Presence ended as well. The role of Providence in Jewish history would now be concealed behind the cloak of apparently natural events.

It was then that the story of Esther took place, as suggested in the Torah, "I shall conceal myself on that day"—"Haster Astir". The truly miraculous events which led to the redemption—Esther's rise to prominence, Mordechai's rescue of the king, the king's bizarre reversal from reverent admiration of Haman to murderous rage against him—were arranged by the guiding force of Providence, concealed below the surface of the flow of history. This pattern is followed in the text of the Book of Esther, where the story is presented without overt reference to Divine intervention, reflecting the concealed nature of the intervention itself.

It is this unique teaching which emerges from the study of Megillas Esther: God has not abandoned the Jewish people, but has rather concealed His protective influence over Jewish destiny; a Jew is never alone. He is borne by the invisible power of a Providence guiding the flow of history towards ultimate redemption and restoration.

Esther אסתר

Chapter I פרק א

1. It was in the days of Achashverosh—¹
this was the Achashverosh
who reigned from Hodu to Cush—
one hundred and twenty-seven colonies.
2. In those days,
when king Achashverosh had established himself²
on his imperial throne,
in the capital city of Shushan.
3. In the third year of his reign,
he tendered a feast for all his ministers and servants,
the forces of Persia and Media,
the nobles and the colonial ministers, in his presence.
4. Where he exhibited
the affluence and eminence of his kingdom,
the glory and splendor³ of his magnificence;
for many days—
one hundred and eighty days.
5. At the completion of these days,
the king tendered, for all the people
present in the capital city of Shushan,

א. וַיְהִי בַיָּמֵי אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
הוּא אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
הַמֶּלֶךְ מְהוּדוּ וְעַד-כּוּשׁ
שֶׁבַע וָעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה:
ב. בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
כַּשְׁמַת | הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ
אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה:
ג. בְּשָׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוֹ
עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֶּה לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו
חֵיל | פָּרַס וּמְדֵי
הַפְּרָתִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לִפְנָיו:
ד. בַּהֲרָאָתוֹ
אֶת-עֹשֶׁר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ
וְאֶת-יָקָר תַּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ
יָמִים רַבִּים
שְ�מוֹנִים וּמֵאָה יוֹם:
ה. וּבְמִלּוֹאת | הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה
עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל-הָעָם
הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה

¹ During the seventy year hiatus between the destruction of the first Temple by the Babylonians, and the restoration of the second Temple. The Babylonians invaders were themselves conquered by the Persians and Achashverosh succeeded the emperor Koresh to the Persian throne. (Rashi.)

² Another interpretation: "When the king gained his composure"—thinking that the Temple would never be rebuilt, and the Jews would remain under his dominion. Until then, however, he was deeply agitated by Yirmiyahu's prophecy that God would remember the Jews "when seventy years of Babylon are completed." (Yirmiyahu, 29:10.) The king calculated erroneously, and concluded that the seventy years were now complete, with the Temple still in ruins, and the Jews under his absolute dominion. He celebrated by supplying the revelers at the feast with vessels confiscated from the Temple (Megillah, 11:b.)

³ This alludes to the splendid priestly vestments, taken from the Temple, which the king wore at the feast. (Megillah, 12:a.)

from the greatest to the least significant,
a feast for seven days,
on the grounds of the garden in the royal orchard.

6. [There were] pure white drapes,
fine woolen cushions, bluish emerald *techeiles* wool,
brocaded with strands of linen
and mauve, woolen *argaman* threads,
over silver columns and marble pillars;
gold and silver couches
on a floor inlaid with rare gems and marble,
set in parallel circular patterns.

7. As for drinking; golden utensils,
other sundry vessels,⁴
and plenty of royal wine, with majestic largesse.

8. The drinking was proper, with no coercion;
for the king had so basically instructed
all his palace officials—
to satisfy each individual's desire.

9. Queen Vashti, as well,
tendered a feast for women,
at king Achashverosh's palace.

10. On the seventh day,
when the king was exhilarated by drink,
he instructed Mehuman, Bizesa, Charvona, Bigsa,
Avagsa, Zeisar, and Charkas, the seven servants
who attended King Achashverosh's person—

11. to present Queen Vashti before the king
[clad] in the royal crown,
to flaunt her beauty before the nations and the ministers,
for she was of beautiful appearance.

למגדול ועד־קטן
משתה שב־עַת יָמִים
בְּחֶצֶר גִּנַּת בֵּיתֶן הַמֶּלֶךְ;
ו. חֹר |

בְּרָפֶס וּתְכֵלֶת
אֲחוּזֵי בְּתָרְלִי־בֹוץ
וְאַרְגָּמָן

עַל־גְּלִילִי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ
מִטּוֹת | זָהָב וְכֶסֶף
עַל רִצְפַּת בְּהַט־וֹשֵׁשׁ
וְדָר וְסִתְרֹת:

ז. וְהַשְׁקוֹת בְּכָלִי זָהָב
וְכֵלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים
וַיֵּין מַלְכוּת רַב כֶּיֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ;
ח. וְהַשְׁתִּיָּה כְדַת אֵין אָגֶס
כִּי־כֵן | יִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ

עַל כָּל־רַב בֵּיתוֹ
לְעִשׂוֹת כְּרִצּוֹן אִישׁ־נְאֻמִּי:
ט. גַּם וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה

עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים
בֵּית הַמַּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ:
י. בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי

כְּטוֹב לִב־הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּיּוֹם
אָמַר לְמַהוּמָן בִּזְסָא חַרְבוֹנָא בִּגְסָא
וְאַבְגָּתָא וְחַר וְכַרְפֶּס שְׁבַעַת הַסְּרִיסִים
הַמְשָׁרְתִּים אֶת־פְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ:
יא. לְהִבְיָא אֶת־וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

בְּכֶתֶר מַלְכוּת
לְהִרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִיסִים אֶת־יָפְיָהּ
כִּי־טוֹבַת מְרָאָה הִיא:

⁴ Taken from the Temple. (Megillah, 12:a.)

12. Queen Vashti refused to attend⁵
as ordered by the king through the servants—
and the king was extremely angered,
his fury consumed him.

יב. ותמאן המלכה ושתי לבוא
בדבר המלך אשר ביד הסריסים
ויקצף המלך מאד
והמתו בערה בו:

13. The king consulted the sages
who were well versed in the affairs of the times,
for the king would thus place matters
before all who were versed
in procedural and legal concerns.

יג. ויאמר המלך לחכמים
ידעיי העתים
פי-כן דבר המלך
לפני כל-ידעיי
דת ודין:

14. Most intimately associated with him,
were Karshena, Sheisar, Admasa, Sarshish,
Meres, Marsena, and Memuchan,
the seven ministers of Persia and Media
who were in personal contact with the king,
and who occupied the highest seats of power
in the kingdom.

יד. והקרב אליו
ברשנא שחר אדמתא תרשיש
מרס מרסנא ממוכן
שבצת שרי | פרס ומדי
ראי פני המלך
הישיבים ראשנה
במלכות:

15. Concerning the proper procedure to follow
with Queen Vashti,
since she did not do
as directed by King Achashverosh
through the servants.

טו. כדת מה-לעשות
במלכה ושתי
על | אשר לא-עשתה
את-מאמר המלך אחשוורוש
ביד הסריסים:

16. Memuchan⁶ spoke
before the king and the ministers:
“It is not only his majesty
that Vashti has aggrieved,
but all the ministers
and all the peoples
in all of King Achashverosh’s colonies.

טז. ויאמר ממוכן
לפני המלך והשרים
לא על-המלך לבדו
עוטה ושתי המלכה
כי על-כל-השרים
ועל-כל-העמים
אשר בכל-מדינות המלך אחשוורוש:

⁵ She was as lewd as her husband, and would have attended, but she was disfigured by leprosy. This was by providential design, to punish her for humiliating Jewish women. (Rashi, from Megillah, 12:b.)

⁶ This was Haman. He is listed last in verse 14, indicating that he was the least of the ministers. But he characteristically vaulted to a position beyond his worth, and brazenly expressed his opinion first, as if he were the king’s chief advisor. (Megillah, 12:b.)

17. For the affair of the queen
will extend to all women,
so that they will disparage their husbands,
saying, 'King Achashverosh commanded
that Queen Vashti be brought before him,
but she never came!'
18. This very day,
the noblewomen in Persia and Media will say—
those who have heard about the affair of the queen
shall report it to the king's ministers
causing enormous disparagement and rage!
19. If his majesty deems it proper,
let him issue a royal edict,⁷
to be recorded in the bylaws of Persia and Media—
never to be revoked—
that Vashti refused to appear
before King Achashverosh;
and let his majesty bestow her regency
on a companion of hers who is superior to her.⁸
20. Now when the news of his majesty's writ
and its implementation reverberates
throughout the kingdom—
vast as it is—
then all the wives will honor their husbands,
from the greatest to the least significant."
21. The advice was viewed favorably by the king

יז. כִּי־יֵצֵא דְבַר־הַמֶּלֶכָּה
עַל־כָּל־הַנָּשִׁים
לְהַבְזוֹת בְּעֲלֵיהֶן בְּעֵינֵיהֶן
בְּאָמְרָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ אָמַר
לְהָבִיא אֶת־וַשְׁתִּי הַמֶּלֶכָּה לִפְנֵיו
וְלֹא־בָאָה:
יח. וְהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה
תֹּאמְרָנָה | שָׂרוֹת פָּרִס־וּמְדִי
אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבַר הַמֶּלֶכָּה
לְכָל שָׂרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
וַיְכַדִּי בְּזִיוֹן וְקֶצֶף:
יט. אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
יֵצֵא דְבַר־מַלְכוּת מִלִּפְנֵיו
וַיִּפְתַּח בְּדַתִּי פָּרִס־וּמְדִי
וְלֹא יִעָבֹר
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תָבוֹא וַשְׁתִּי
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ
וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְרַעֲיָתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה:
כ. וְנִשְׁמַע פְּתוּם הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר־יַעֲשֶׂה
בְּכָל־מַלְכוּתוֹ
כִּי רַבָּה הִיא
וְכָל־הַנָּשִׁים יִתְּנוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן
לְמַגְדֹּל וְעַד־קָטָן:
כא. וַיִּיטֹב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

⁷ Ordering Vashti's execution. And let it become law that any woman guilty of a similar offense against her husband shall be executed. (Rashi.)

⁸ When king Shaul spared some of Amalek's livestock and failed to execute the Amalekite king Agag, the prophet Shmuel declared that he had forfeited his throne, which God would bestow "on a companion of yours who is superior to you" (Shmuel 1, 25:2). By the identical phrase, "let the king bestow her regency 'on a companion of hers who is superior to her,'" the throne was restored to Shaul's descendant Esther, who was chosen as queen when Vashti was deposed (Midrash, 4:9). Indeed, Esther was instrumental in bringing Agag's descendant, Haman the Agagite, to the gallows, thereby rectifying the damage which evolved from her ancestor's misjudgment.

and his ministers, וְהַשָּׂרִים
and the king acted וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ
on Memuchan's recommendation. כְּדָבָר מְמוּכָן:
22. He dispatched scrolls כּב. וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים
to all of the king's colonies— אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ
to each and every colony in its own script, אֶל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ
and each and every people in their own language— וְאֶל-עַם וָעַם כְּלָשׁוֹנוֹ
instructing that every husband לְהִיזֹת כָּל-אִישׁ
be dominant in his home, שָׂרָר בְּבֵיתוֹ
and that his people's language be the one spoken. וּמְדַבֵּר כְּלָשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ:

Chapter 2 פרק ב

1. After these events, א. אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
as King Achashverosh's ire dissipated, כְּשֶׁחַמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ
he remembered Vashti זָכַר אֶת-וַשְׁתִּי
and how she had acted, וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָהּ
and the decree against her.⁹ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ:
2. The king's youthful valets suggested: ב. וַיֹּאמְרוּ נְעָרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו
"Let them seek, for his majesty, יִבְקְשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ
young maidens of beautiful appearance. נְעֹרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה:
3. And let his majesty appoint officials ג. וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים
in all the colonies of his kingdom, בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת מְלְכוּתוֹ
who shall assemble all the young maidens וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת-כָּל-נְעָרֵי-הַבְּתוּלָה
of beautiful appearance טוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה
at the capital city of Shushan, אֶל-שׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה
in the harem residence, אֶל-בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים
in the custody of his majesty's enunuch¹⁰ Heige, אֶל-יָד הַגָּא כְּרִים הַמֶּלֶךְ
the harem overseer, שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים

⁹ He realized that her demurral was justified, and the decree against her unmerited. Why, indeed, was her apparently undeserved execution ordained by Providence? Because she persuaded Achashverosh to prohibit the restoration of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem, as it had been destroyed by her grandfather, the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar. (Midrash, 5:2.)

and let them be supplied with their cosmetics.

וַנַּחֲזֵן תְּמַרְקִיָּהֶן:

4. And the young woman

ד. וְהַנְּעָרָה

whom his majesty views with approval

אֲשֶׁר תִּיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

shall reign in place of Vashti."

תִּמְלֹךְ תַּחַת וַשְׁתִּי

This suggestion was viewed favorably by the king,

וַיִּיטֵב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

and he implemented it.

וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן:

5. There was a Yehudite man¹¹

ה. אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה

in the capital city of Shushan.

בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה

His name: Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shim'i,

וּשְׁמוֹ מָרְדֳּכַי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן שִׁמְעִי

son of Kish, a Binyaminite man.

בֶּן-קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי:

6. Who was exiled from Jerusalem

ו. אֲשֶׁר הִגְלוּ מִירוּשָׁלַיִם

with the captives exiled

עַם-הַגְּלוּלָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָהּ

with Yechaniah, king of Yehudah,

עַם יְכָנְיָה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה

driven into exile by

אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָהּ

Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.¹²

נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל:

7. He was the foster parent of Hadassah—

ז. וַיְהִי אִמָּן אֶת-הַדַּסָּה

this was his cousin Esther—

הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בַּת-דָּדּוֹ

as she had neither father nor mother.

כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם

The young woman

וְהַנְּעָרָה

was beautiful in form and appearance,

יִפְתָּ-תֵּאֵר וְטוֹבַת מְרֹאֶה

and when her father and mother died,

וּבְמָוֶת אָבֶיהָ וְאִמָּהּ

Mordechai adopted her as a daughter.¹³

לָקַחָהּ מָרְדֳּכַי לֹו לְבַת:

8. Now it happened,

ח. וַיְהִי

¹⁰ Both Heige and Sha'ashgaz (v.14) were eunuchs. (Midrash, 5:3.)

¹¹ All the Jews who accompanied the kings of Yehudah into the Babylonian exile were indentified as Yehudim. Mordechai, however, was actually a member of the tribe of Binyamin. (Rashi.) Or, יְהוּד is suggestive of יְחִיד, "unification." Mordechai would publicly unify the name of God by refusing to bow before Haman, who had emblazoned his breast with an idolatrous image. (Midrash, 6:2.)

¹² To Babylon. When the Persians vanquished the Babylonians, and King Koresh granted the Jews permission to reconstruct the Temple, Mordechai returned to the Holy Land to join the reconstruction effort. (Ezra, 2:2.) Then, when Koresh rescinded the permit (Ibid, 4:24,) Mordechai journeyed to the capital city of Shushan to attempt to persuade the king to renew the grant (Ralbag to Ezra, 2:2. Cf. Targum Yonasan here.) It is in the period of Koresh's successor, Achashverosh, that the Purim episode unfolds.

¹³ According to the Rabbis, not לָנָה, "as a daughter," but לְנֵיהָ, "as a home"—i.e., Mordechai took her as a wife. (Rashi.)

when the king's edict, his bylaw, was made public,
and a large number of young women were gathered
at the capital city of Shushan,
in the custody of Heigai,
that Esther was brought to the royal palace,
in the custody of Heigai, the harem overseer.

9. He viewed the young woman favorably,
and she gained his benevolence.

He eagerly delivered her cosmetics
and her clothing allowance to her
also the seven special maidservants
assigned to her from the royal household staff.

He favored her and her maidservants
with preferential treatment at the harem residence.

10. Esther did not reveal [the identity of] her people
or her heritage,
since Mordechai had instructed her
not to reveal it.¹⁴

11. Each and every day,
Mordechai would pace before the courtyard
of the harem residence,
to apprise himself of Esther's welfare,¹⁵
and of what would be done with her.¹⁶

12. When the time arrived
for each of the young women
to be admitted to King Achashverosh,

בְּהִשְׁמַע דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָחוּ
וּבְהִקְבֹּץ נְעָרוֹת רַבּוֹת
אֶל־שׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה
אֶל־יָד הֶגַי
וַתִּלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֶל־יָד הֶגַי שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים:
ט. וַתִּטֵּב הַנְּעָרָה בְּעֵינָיו
וַתֵּשֶׂא חֶסֶד לִפְנֵיו
וַיִּבְהֹל אֶת־תְּמָרוּקֶיהָ
וְאֶת־מְנוּחָהּ לָתֵת לָהּ
וְאֵת שְׂבַע הַנְּעָרוֹת הָרְאיוֹת
לְתַת־לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ
וַיִּשְׁנֶה וְאֶת־נְעָרוֹתֶיהָ
לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים:
י. לֹא־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־עַמָּהּ
וְאֶת־מֹלְדוֹתָהּ
כִּי מָרְדֳּכַי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ
אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִגִּיד:
יא. וּבְכָל־יּוֹם וָיּוֹם
מָרְדֳּכַי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֲצֵר
בֵּית־הַנָּשִׁים
לְדַעַת אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר
וּמִה־יֵּעָשֶׂה בָּהּ:
יב. וּבְהִגָּיעַ תּוֹר
נְעָרָה וְנְעָרָה
לָבוֹא | אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ

¹⁴ He hoped for her release, and thought that this would be unlikely if it were learned that she was a descendant of the royal house of Shaul (Rashi.)

¹⁵ The Holy One, blessed is He, said to him, 'You sought the welfare of a single soul—Esther's welfare. By your life, you will eventually seek the welfare of an entire nation! Thus it is written, "[Mordechai]...sought the welfare of his people, and was the spokesman for the peace of his descendants.'" (see 10:3)

¹⁶ Not "to her," "with her." Mordechai knew that a woman of Esther's saintliness could only have been subjected to Achashverosh's pleasure as an instrument of some grand Providential design. He waited to ascertain what would be done with her— by Providence. (Rashi.)

- at the end
of her participation in the course for women
which lasted twelve months—
for they were annointed, during their cosmetic
treatment, with the following:
six months with balm of myrrh,
and six months with aromatic ointments
and other womanly cosmetics.
3. This is how the young woman would be admitted
to the king:
whatever she requested would be provided
to accompany her from the harem residence
to the royal palace.
14. She would arrive in the evening
and return in the morning,
to a second harem residence,
in the custody of Sha'ashgaz,
the king's eunuch, overseer of the concubines.
She would no longer be admitted to the king
unless the king desired her,
when she would be summoned by name.
15. When the time arrived for Esther,
the daughter of Avichayil,
the uncle of Mordechai,
whom he had adopted as a daughter,
to be admitted to the king,
she requested nothing
save what was suggested by Heigai,
the king's eunuch, the harem overseer.
Esther was regarded with favor
by everyone who beheld her.¹⁷
- מקץ
היות לה כרת הנשים
שנים אשר חודש
כי בן ימלא ימי מרוקיהן
ששה חדשים בשמן המור
וששה חדשים בבשמים
ובחמרוקי הנשים:
יג. וכן הנהגה באה
אל המלך
את כל-אשר תאמר ינתן לה
לכוא עמה מבית הנשים
צד-בית המלך:
יד. בערב היא באה
ובבקר היא שבה
אל-בית הנשים שני
אל-יד שעשגז
סריס המלך שמר הפילגשים
לא-תבוא עוד אל-המלך
כי אם-תפץ בה המלך
ונקראה בשם:
טו. ובהגיע תו-אסתר
בת-אביחיל |
יד מרדכי
אשר לקחלו לכת
לכוא אל-המלך
לא בקשה דבר
כי אם את-אשר יאמר הגי
סריס-המלך שמר הנשים
ותהי אסתר נשאת חן
בעיני כל-ראיה:

¹⁷ Everyone imagined that she was their countrywoman. (Megillah, 13:a.)

16. Esther was brought to King Achashverosh,
into his royal palace,
in the tenth month—
that is, the month of Teves—
during the seventh year of his reign.

17. The king loved Esther
more than all the women,
she gained his favor and his benevolence
more than all the maidens,
so he placed the royal crown upon her head,
and coronated her in place of Vashti.

18. The king tendered a magnificent feast
for all of his ministers and servants—
the feast of Esther.

He waived the colonial taxes,
and lavished gifts with majestic largesse.

19. When the maidens were gathered a second time,
Mordechai sat at the gateway to the king.¹⁸

20. Esther would not reveal [the identity of]
her heritage or her people,
just as Mordechai had directed her.
Esther followed Mordechai's bidding,
just as she did when she was reared by him.

21. In those days,
when Mordechai sat at the gateway to the king,
Bigsan and Seresh became enraged—
they were two of the king's stewards,
of the guardians of the entrance [to his dwelling]—
and sought to assault King Achashverosh.

22. The matter was apprehended by Mordechai.¹⁹

טו. ותלקח אסתר אל-המלך אחשורוש
אל-בית מלכותו
בחודש העשירי
הוא-חודש טבת
בשנת-שבע למלכותו:

יז. ויאהב המלך את-אסתר
מכל-הנשים
ותשא-תן וחסד לפניו
מכל-הבחילות
וישם כתר-מלכות בראשה
וימליכה תחת ושת:

יח. ויעש המלך משתה גדול
לכל-שריו ועבדיו
את משתה אסתר
והנחה למדינות עשה
ויתן משאת כתר המלך:

ט. ובהקבץ בחילות שנית
ומרדכי ישב בשער-המלך:

כ. אין אסתר מגדת
מולדתה ואת-עמה
באשר צוה עליה מרדכי
ואת-מאמר מרדכי אסתר עשה
באשר היתה באמנה אמו:

כא. בימים ההם
ומרדכי יושב בשער-המלך
קצף בגתן וחורש
שני-סריסי המלך
משקרי הסף
ויבקשו לשלח יד במלך אחשורוש:
כב. ויודע הדבר למרדכי

¹⁸ Admonishing Esther. Thus, Esther would not reveal, etc.... (Rashi.)

¹⁹ The plotters spoke freely in their native Tarsi tongue, unaware that Mordechai, like all members of the Sanhedrin, was fluent in seventy languages. He overheard the plot, and alerted the queen. (Rashi.)

who reported it to Queen Esther.
Esther related it to the king in Mordechai's name.

23. The matter was investigated and verified,
and both were hung from a gallows.

This was inscribed in the book of archives
in the presence of the king.

וַיַּגֵּד לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
וְתֹאמַר אֶסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מָרְדֳּכָי:
כִּג. וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא
וַיִּתְּלוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל-עֵץ
וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

Chapter 3 פרק ג

1. After these events,²⁰
King Achashverosh conferred eminence on Haman,
the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite, and exalted him,
placing his seat of office
above all of his fellow ministers.

2. And all of the king's servants
who were at the gateway to the king
kneeled and prostrated themselves before Haman,
for the king had so commanded concerning him—
but Mordechai would neither kneel
nor prostrate himself.

3. Said the king's servants
who were at the gateway of the king
to Mordechai,
“Why are you flouting
the king's command?”

4. It happened that, when they spoke to him daily,
and he paid them no heed,
they informed Haman,²¹

א. אַחֲרַי | הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה
גִּדְּלֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אֶת-הַמֶּן
בֶּן-הַמְּדַסָּא הָאֲגָגִי וַיִּשְׁאֲהוּ
וַיֵּשֶׁם אֶת-כִּסֵּאוֹ
מֵעַל כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ:
ב. וְכָל-עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
פֹּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהַמֶּן
כִּי-כֵן צִוָּה-לּוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וּמָרְדֳּכָי לֹא יִכְרַע
וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה:
ג. וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר-בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
לְמָרְדֳּכָי
מַדּוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר
אֶת מִצְוַת הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ד. וַיְהִי כִּזְמֹנָם אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיֹּם
וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם
וַיִּגִּדּוּ לְהַמֶּן

²⁰ Whereby Esther ascended to the throne, and the king was beholden to Mordechai, so that the basis for the eventual redemption was in place—then, “King Achashverosh gave eminence to Haman...” Providence prepares the remedy before allowing the calamity to strike. (Rashi.)

²¹ When the servants informed Haman that Mordechai refused to kneel, he remarked that Mordechai's forefathers, Yakov and Rachel, and their children had prostrated themselves before his ancestor Eisav (Bereishis, 33:3.) When this remark was conveyed to Mordechai, he retorted that he was a descendant of Yakov's youngest son, Binyamin, who was born after the meeting with Eisav (Ibid, 35:18.) and had never prostrated himself before a mortal. (Midrash, 7:7.)

- to see לראות
whether Mordechai's avowal would be sustained— הִצְמִדוּ דְּבָרֵי מֶרְדֳּכָי
for he told them that he was a Yehudi. כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי:
5. Haman then observed ה. וַיֵּרָא הָמָן
that Mordechai neither כִּי־אֵין מֶרְדֳּכָי
kneeled nor prostrated himself before him, כָּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ
and Haman was totally incensed. וַיִּמְלֵא הָמָן חֲמָה:
6. But it was demeaning, in his view, ו. וַיִּבֹז בְּעֵינָיו
to strike at Mordechai alone, לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֳּכָי לְבָדּוֹ
for he was informed כִּי־הִגִּידוּ לוֹ
of [the identity of] Mordechai's people. אֶת־עַם מֶרְדֳּכָי
Haman sought to destroy all the Yehudim וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הָמָן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים
throughout Achashverosh's realm— אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מְלָכוּת אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
Mordechai's people. עַם מֶרְדֳּכָי:
7. In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, ז. בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן
during King Achashverosh's twelfth year, בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁתִּיתִים עָשְׂרָה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
a "pur", meaning "lot", was cast הַפִּיל פֹּהַר הוּא הַגּוֹרָל
in the presence of Haman, לִפְנֵי הָמָן
for a specific day, מִיּוֹם | לְיוֹם
and, specifically, the twelfth month, וַיִּמְחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנִים־עָשָׂר
which is the month of Adar.²² הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר:
8. Haman then said to King Achashverosh: ח. וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
"There exists a particular people, יֵשְׁנוּ עַם־אֶחָד
far-flung, widespread among the peoples קַפְזָר וּמִפְּזָר בֵּין הָעַמִּים
in all the colonies of your realm. בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלָכוּתְךָ
Their customs differ from those of all peoples, וְדַחֲתִיָּהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם
and they do not abide by his majesty's bylaws; וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הֶמְלֵךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים
his majesty has nothing to gain by tolerating them. וְלִמְלֶכֶךְ אֵין־שְׂוָה לְהַנִּיחָם:
9. If his majesty deems it proper, ט. אִם־עַל־הֶמְלֵךְ טוֹב

²² Haman rejoiced, for it was in that month that Moshe died, indicating, he thought, that the month was unfortunate for the Jews. But he failed to realize that, as Moshe was also born during Adar, the month is a propitious one for the Jews. (Megillah, 13:b.)

let it be inscribed that they are to be exterminated.²³

And I shall weigh out ten thousand silver kikars
under the auspices of the executive staff,
to be deposited in the royal coffers."

10. The king removed his ring from his hand,²⁴
and presented it to Haman the son of Hamdasa
the Agagite, oppressor of the Yehudim.

11. And the king said to Haman,

"Keep the silver
and do as you wish with the[se] people."

12. The royal scribes were then summoned,
during the first month,

on the thirteenth day of the month,

and transcripts were made

of all of Haman's directives,

to the imperial envoys,

to the governors of each of the colonies,

and to the ministers of each people,

each and every colony in its own script,

each and every people in its own language;

it was written in King Achashverosh's name

and sealed with the royal ring.

13. So that scrolls would be dispatched,

carried by couriers,

to all of the king's colonies;

to devastate, slaughter, and annihilate

all the Yehudim, young and old,

יִכְתֹּב לְאַבְדֵּם

וְעֲשֶׂת אֲלֵפִים כֶּכֶר-כֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁקוּלִי

עַל-יְדֵי עֹשֵׂי הַמֶּלֶכָּה

לְהָבִיא אֶל-גִּנּוּזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

י. וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ

וַיַּחֲנֶנּה לְהָמָן בֶּן-הַמְדִּישָׁה

הָאֲגָגִי צֹרֵר הַיְּהוּדִים:

יא. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמָן

הַכֶּסֶף נָתַן לְךָ

וְהָעָם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ:

יב. וַיִּקְרָאוּ סֹפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

בַּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן

בְּשִׁלּוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ

וַיִּכְתֹּב

כָּל-אֲשֶׁר-צִוָּה הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֶל אַחַשְׁוֵרְפָּאֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְאֶל-הַפָּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר | עַל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה

וְאֶל-שָׂרֵי עָם וָעָם

מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כְּכַתְּבָהּ

וְעָם וָעָם כְּלִשְׁוֹנָהּ

בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ נִכְתָּב

וְנִחְתָּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

יג. וַנִּשְׁלַח סֹפְרִים

בְּיַד הָרָצִים

אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ

לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרַג וּלְאַבֵּד

אֶת-כָּל-יְהוּדִים מִנּוּעַר וְעַד-זָקֵן

²³ Earlier, Haman had advised Achashverosh to entice the Jews into behaving sinfully, so that they would incur God's wrath. Achashverosh followed the advice, and invited them to the royal feast (1:5-8.) Mordechai warned them not to attend, but many thousands ignored the warning, and joined in the drunken debauchery. The incriminating angel then argued that they were worthy of destruction, and God agreed. (Midrash, 7:13.)

²⁴ The removal of the king's ring was more effective than the forty-eight prophets sent by God to admonish the people. They could not convince them to repent, but the transfer of the ring to Haman produced three days of fasting and repentance (4:16) (Megillah, 14:a).

children, women, in a single day—
on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month,
which is the month of Adar—
with their booty to be despoiled.
14. The terms of the writ
would become legally binding
in each and every colony—
displayed conspicuously before all the peoples,
so that they would be poisoned on that day.
15. The couriers
were dispatched by urgent royal command,
and the decree was delivered
in the capital city of Shushan.
The king and Haman then sat down for drinks,
while the city of Shushan²⁵ was in confusion.

טף ונשים ביום אחד
בשלושה עשר לחדש שנים-עשר
הוא-חדש אדר
ושללם לבזוז:
יד. פתשגן הפתב
להנתן דת
בכל-מדינה ומדינה
גלוי לכל-העמים
להיות עתדים ליום הזה:
טו. הרצים
יצאו דחופים בדבר המלך
והדת נתנה
בשושן הבירה
והמלך והמן ישבו לשמות
והעיר שושן נבוכה:

Chapter 4 פרק ד

1. Mordechai was apprised
of everything that had transpired.²⁶
Mordechai rent his garments,
and garbed himself in sackloth and ashes.
He proceeded into the city,
and sounded a great, bitter wail.²⁷
2. He came to the front of the king's gate,
for one could not enter the gateway to the king

א. ומרדכי ידע
אח-כל-אשר געשה
ויקרע מרדכי את-בגדיו
וילבש שק ואפר
ויצא בתוך העיר
ויזעק וזעקה גדולה ומרה:
ב. ויבוא עד לפני שער-המלך
כי אין לבוא אל-שער המלך

²⁵ The Jews of the city (Rashi.) Or, the city in its entirety, as the Gentiles rejoiced, while the Jews wept. (Targum.)

²⁶ By Divine revelation. He was told that the people were being punished for kneeling before an idol during the times of Nevuchadnezzar, and for joining in the feast of Achashverosh. (Rashi.)

²⁷ When the patriarch Ya'akov intercepted Yitzchak's blessing, his brother Eisav sounded a great, bitter wail. (Bereishis, 27:34) God recognizes every complaint, even that of Eisav, and awaits the opportune historic moment for a suitable response. Now, after nine centuries, Eisav's wail was matched by the great, bitter wail sounded by Ya'akov's descendant, Mordechai, over the decree promulgated by Eisav's descendant, Haman. (Midrash, 8:1)

- clad in sackcloth. בְּלִבְּשׁוֹ שֵׁק:
3. And in each and every colony,
wherever the king's directives and bylaws reached—
there was immense grief among the Yehudim,
fasting, weeping and lamenting.
Sackcloth and ashes cloaked multitudes. ג. וּבְכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה
מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ
אֵכָל גְּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים
וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפָּד
שֵׁק וְאַפֵּר יָצַע לְרַבִּים:
4. Esther's maidservants and stewards came
and told her about it,
and the queen was extremely shaken.
She dispatched garments to clothe Mordechai
and remove his sackcloth,
but he refused them. ד. וְחֹבְלָאָהּ נְעֻרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסֶיהָ
וַיַּגִּידוּ לָהּ
וַתַּחְלֶחֱלַל הַמֶּלֶכָה מְאֹד
וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת-מֶרְדֳּכָי
וּלְהַסִּיר שִׁקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו
וְלֹא קִבְּלָ:
5. She then called for Hasach,²⁸
one of the king's officials,
whom he had placed at her disposal,
and instructed him concerning Mordechai,
to ascertain what was happening, and why. ה. וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַחֲזֵק
מִסָּרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר
הֶעֱמִיד לִפְנֶיהָ
וַתְּצַוֶּהוּ עַל-מֶרְדֳּכָי
לְדַעַת מַה-זֶּה וְעַל-מַה-זֶּה:
ו. וַיֵּצֵא הַחֲזֵק אֶל-מֶרְדֳּכָי
אֶל-רְחוֹב הָעִיר
אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי שַׁעַר-הַמֶּלֶךְ:
ז. וַיַּגִּידְלוּ מֶרְדֳּכָי
אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ
וְאֵת | פֶּרֶשֶׁת הַכֶּסֶף
אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הָמָן
לְשָׁקוֹל עַל-גִּנְגֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
בִּיהוּדִים לְאַבְדָּם:
ח. וְאֶת-פַּתְשָׁנָן כְּתִבְתִּיהָ
אֲשֶׁר-נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשָׁן
6. Hasach withdrew, and went to Mordechai,
to the city thoroughfare,
which was at the front of the gateway to the king.
7. Mordechai informed him
of all that he had experienced,
and of the silver²⁹
which Haman had explicitly promised
to weigh into the royal coffers
so that the Yehudim would be annihilated.
8. A copy of the text of the legally binding writ
which had been delivered in Shushan,

²⁸ This was the prophet Daniel (Megillah, 15:a.) According to one opinion, Haman arranged for his assassination when he learned that he served as the liaison between Mordechai and the queen (Targum. See Tosafos to Bava Basra, 4:a.)

²⁹ Mordechai knew of this by Divine revelation (Targum.)

- mandating that they be destroyed, להשמידם
he gave to him, נתן לו
to show Esther, and to inform her; להראות את-אסתר ולהגיד לה
and to order her to gain entrance to the king, ולצוות עליה לבוא אל-המלך
to plead with him, להתחנן-לו
and to beg him to spare her people. ולבקש מלפניו על-עמה:
9. Hasach came back, and conveyed, to Esther, ט. ויבוא התך ויגיד לאסתר
Mordechai's remarks. את דברי מרדכי:
10. Esther spoke with Hasach, י. ותאמר אסתר להתך
and instructed him to [tell] Mordechai: ותצוהו אל-מרדכי:
11. "All of his majesty's servants, יא. כל-עבדי המלך
as well as the peoples of his majesty's colonies, ועם מדינות המלך
know that any man or woman ידעים אשר כל-איש ואשה
who comes as close to his majesty אשר-יבוא אל-המלך
as the innermost courtyard אל-החצר הפנימית
without an invitation, אשר לא-יקרא
suffers a single fate; execution— אחת דתו להמית
save for someone toward whom his majesty extends לְבַד מֵאִשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
the golden sceptre, to permit him to live. את-שרביט הזהב וחייה
And I have not been granted an invitation ואני לא נקראתי
to visit his majesty לבוא אל-המלך
these thirty days." זה שלושים יום:
12. They³⁰ conveyed Esther's remarks to Mordechai. יב. ויגידו למרדכי את דברי אסתר:
13. Mordechai declared, in reply to Esther: יג. ויאמר מרדכי להשיב אל-אסתר
"You had better not fantasize אל-תדמי בנפשוך
that in the royal palace you will escape להמלט בית-המלך
the fate of all the other Jews. מכל-היהודים:
14. For, if you keep silent at this time, יד. כי אם-תחגרש תחרישי בעת הזאת
release and liberation רוח ונצלה

³⁰ Others, but not Hasach. Haman had him assassinated (Targum.) Or, Hasach felt that Esther's reply fell short of her responsibility as a Jewess. He did not wish to serve as the emissary of her failure, and withdrew as her messenger to Mordechai. (Megillah, 15:a.)

will materialize for the Yehudim
from some other source,
and you and your father's lineage will perish.
Who knows whether, at this time next year,
you will retain your royal position."

15. Esther declared, in reply to Mordechai:

16. "Go, gather all the Yehudim

found in Shushan, and fast for my sake.

Take neither food nor drink

for three days—night and day.

I and my maidservants will also fast this way.

Having done this, I will come to the king

even though it is unlawful

and as I am bereft,³¹ so must I be further bereft."

17. Mordechai passed through [the city],³²

and implemented all of Esther's instructions to him.

יַעֲמֹד לַיהוּדִים

מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר

וְאַתָּה וּבֵית־אָבִיךָ תִּאבְדּוּ

וְיָדָע יוֹדֵעַ אִם־לָעַת כָּזֹאת

הַנֶּעֱצָה לְמַלְכוּתִּי:

טו. וְתֹאמַר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַשִּׁיב אֶל־מָרְדֳּכָי:

טז. לֵךְ כְּנוּס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים

הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי

וְאַל־תֹּאכְלוּ וְאַל־תִּשְׁתּוּ

שְׁלֹשַׁת יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם

גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצִיּוּם בֵּין

וּבֵין־אֲבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כִדָּת

וּכְאֲשֶׁר אֲבִדְתִּי אֲבִדְתִּי:

יז. וַיַּעֲבֹד מָרְדֳּכָי

וַיַּעַשׂ כְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוְתָהּ עָלָיו אֶסְתֵּר:

Chapter 5 פרק ה

1. It was on the third day.

Esther cloaked herself in majesty,³³

and stood in the innermost palace courtyard,

facing the palace.

The king sat on his imperial throne,

א. וַיְהִי | בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי

וַתִּלְבַּשׂ אֶסְתֵּר מַלְכוּת

וַתַּעֲמֹד בְּחֹצֵר בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית

נֹכַח בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹשֵׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ

³¹ Of my family, so must I now be bereft of earthly life (Targum.) Or, 'So must I now be bereft of you.' Esther had been permitted to resume marital relations with her husband Mordechai (see In. 5), as she had never willingly visited Achashverosh. Now, however, she would "be bereft" of Mordechai. Although her action in rescuing the entire nation was supremely meritorious, her voluntary submission to the king constituted a breach of the marriage covenant with Mordechai, and she would be prohibited forever from having relations with him. (Rashi, from Midrash.)

³² Or, "Mordechai bypassed" the laws of Pesach. The fast fell on the first day of Pesach, when the holiday feast is obligatory. Yet Mordechai "bypassed" the obligation and ordered the fast, using the special powers of the Sanhedrin to suspend such obligations in times of extreme need. (Rashi, from Megillah, 15:a.)

³³ In majestic garments. However, as Scripture omits the word "garments," the inference is that she was cloaked in majesty itself—in Divine majesty. Esther enveloped herself in the supremely majestic Presence of the Sacred Spirit. (Rashi, from Megillah, 15:a.)

- in the royal chamber,
facing the entrance to the palace.
2. Now, when the king saw Queen Esther
standing in the courtyard,
she gained his favorable regard,
and the king extended, towards Esther,
the golden sceptre in his hand.
Esther came closer,
and touched the point of the sceptre.
3. The king said to her:
"What do you need, Queen Esther,
what do you wish?
Up until half the empire,³⁴
and it shall be granted to you!"
4. Esther said, "If his majesty deems it proper,
let his majesty and Haman³⁵ attend, today,
a feast which I have prepared for him."
5. The king said,
"Urge Haman to quickly fulfill
Esther's instructions."
So the king and Haman arrived
at the feast which Esther had prepared.
6. The king said to Esther at the winefest,
"Whatever you request shall be granted to you!
Whatever you wish,
up until half the empire, shall be fulfilled!"
- ב. ויהי כראות המלך את אסתר המלכה
עומדת בcourtyard
ונשאה חן בעיניו
וישט המלך לאסתר
את שרביט הזהב אשר בידו
ותקרב אסתר
ותגע בראש השרביט:
ג. ויאמר לה המלך
מה־לך אסתר המלכה
ומה־בקשתך
עד־חצי המלכות
וינתן לך:
ד. ותאמר אסתר אל־המלך טוב
יבוא המלך והמן היום
אל־המשתה אשר־עשיתי לו:
ה. ויאמר המלך
מהרו את־המן לעשות
אח־דבר אסתר
ויבא המלך והמן
אל־המשתה אשר־עשתה אסתר:
ו. ויאמר המלך לאסתר במשתה הין
מה־שאלתך וינתן לך
ומה־בקשתך
עד־חצי המלכות ותעש:

³⁴ This alludes to the Temple in Jerusalem, which was situated at the center of the Persian empire, and was then in ruins. Achashverosh was prepared to satisfy the queen's every whim, up until, but not including, the restoration of the Temple, which stood at 'half the empire.' (Rashi, from Megillah, 15:b.)

³⁵ Esther wanted Haman near at hand, so that she might find a means of discrediting him before the king; or, she thought that the king would suspect Haman of consorting with her, and execute both of them; or, she felt that the Jews would rely on her influence with the king, rather than on God. She therefore created the impression that she had abandoned them in favor of Haman, so that they would concentrate fully on prayer and penitence. (Megillah, 15:b.)

7. Esther replied, saying,
 “My request, and my wish:
 8. If I have gained His Majesty’s favorable regard,
 and if His Majesty deems it proper
 to fulfill my request
 and gratify my wish;
 let His Majesty and Haman attend the feast
 which I shall tender for them—
 and tomorrow
 I shall comply with His Majesty’s command.”³⁶
9. Haman ventured forth, that day,
 joyful and content;
 but when Haman perceived Mordechai
 at the gateway to the king,
 neglecting to rise or bestir himself for him,
 Haman was totally incensed at Mordechai.
10. Haman restrained himself, arrived at his home,
 and gathered his friends
 and his wife Zeresh.
11. Haman boasted, to them,
 of the glories of his affluence
 and of his profusion of sons;
 of all the eminence the king had given him,
 and that he had exalted him
 above the ministers and the royal servants.
12. “And,” Haman declared,
 “Even now, Queen Esther let no man
 come with the king to the feast
 that she had prepared, but myself;
 moreover, tomorrow also
- ז. וּמַעַן אֶסְתֵּר וְתֹאמַר
 שְׂאֵלֹתִי וּבְקִשְׁתִּי:
 ח. אִם־מָצְאֵתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
 לַחַת אֶת־שְׂאֵלֹתִי
 וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־בְּקִשְׁתִּי
 יָבֹוא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמֵּן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה
 אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם
 וּמָחָר
 אֶעֱשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 ט. וַיֵּצֵא הַמֵּן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
 שִׂמְחָה וְטוֹב לֵב
 וּכְרֹאוֹת הַמֵּן אֶת־מָרְדֳּכָי
 בַּשַּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְלֹא־קָם וְלֹא־זָע מִמֶּנּוּ
 וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֵּן עַל־מָרְדֳּכָי חֲמָה;
 וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הַמֵּן וַיָּבֹוא אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ
 וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֵא אֶת־אֲהֻבָּיו
 וְאֶת־זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ:
 יא. וַיִּסְפֹּר לָהֶם הַמֵּן
 אֶת־כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ
 וְכָכָה בָנָיו
 וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ
 עַל־הַשָּׂרִים וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 יב. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֵּן
 אֲנִי לֹא־הִבֵּי־אָה אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
 עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה
 אֲשֶׁר־עֲשִׂתָּה כִּי אִם־אוֹתִי
 וְגַם־לְמָחָר

³⁶ That I reveal my identity. (Rashi.)

I have been invited by her to join the king.
 13. Still, all this is meaningless to me
 whenever
 I see Mordechai the Yehudi
 sitting at the gateway to the king.”
 14. His wife Zeresh ³⁷ told him—
 and so too all his friends—
 “Let them build a gallows fifty *amōhs* high.
 In the morning, suggest to the king
 that they hang Mordechai from it
 and join the king at the feast joyfully.”
 The scheme pleased Haman,
 and he built the gallows.

אָנִי קָרוּא־לָהּ עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 יג. וְכָל־זֶה אֵינֶנּוּ שׁוֹהַ לִּי
 בְּכָל־עֵת
 אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי
 יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 יד. וַתֹּאמֶר לּוֹ זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ
 וְכָל־אֲהָבָיו
 יַעֲשׂוּ־עֵץ גָּבוֹה חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה
 וּבִבְקֹר אֶמְרָה לַמֶּלֶךְ
 וַיַּחֲלוּ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי עָלָיו
 וּבָא עִם־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה שְׂמֵחַ
 וַיִּטֵּב הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הָמָן
 וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ:

Chapter 6 פרק ו

1. That night, the king’s sleep was disturbed,³⁸
 so he called for the bringing of the book of archives,
 of historical events,
 to be recited before the king.
 2. It was discovered, in the record,
 that Mordechai had reported
 that Bigsan and Seresh,
 two of the king’s stewards,
 of the guardians of the entrance,

א. בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְרָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וַיֹּאמֶר לְהָבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר הַזְכָּרֹנוֹת
 דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים
 וַיִּהְיוּ נִקְרָאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:
 ב. וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב
 אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מָרְדֳּכַי
 עַל־בִּגְתָּנָא וְזֶרֶשׁ
 שְׁנֵי סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
 מִשְׁמָרֵי הַסָּף

³⁷ There were three-hundred and sixty-five advisers, and Zeresh was the shrewdest of all. She recalled that most forms of execution were ineffective against Jews—Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah had survived the fiery furnace, Daniel the lion’s den, Yosef the dungeon, etc. No one in Jewish history, however, had survived the gallows. Thus, she reasoned, hanging would be the proper method of executing Mordechai. Haman agreed, and built the gallows. (Midrash, 9:2.)

³⁸ This was not a natural episode of sleeplessness, but was engendered by Providential design, to begin the sequence of events which would lead to Haman’s downfall. Or, the king suspected Esther of consorting with Haman, and of plotting his assassination. He wondered why no one had informed him of the plot. Perhaps, he thought, because he had failed to reward those who had saved him in the past. So he called for the book of archives, to ascertain whether this was true. (Rashi.)

- had sought to assault
King Achashverosh.
3. The king said,
“What honor or eminence has been bestowed
on Mordechai for this?”
The king’s youthful valets replied,
“Not a thing has been done for him.”
4. “Who is in the courtyard?,” said the king.
Now Haman had just reached
the outer courtyard of the palace,
to suggest to the king that Mordechai be hung
from the gallows he had prepared for him.³⁹
5. The king’s youths said to him,
“Haman is here, standing in the courtyard.”
The king said, “Let him in.”
6. Haman entered.
The king said to him,
“What should be done for a man
whom the king wishes to honor.
Now Haman reflected,⁴⁰
‘Whom would the king desire to glorify
more than me?’
7. Haman said to the king,
“A man whose glory the king desires!
8. Let them bring the imperial robe,
worn by His Majesty,
and the horse mounted by His Majesty;
the imperial crown to be placed on his head.
9. Let the robe and the horse be handed
- אשר בקשו לשלח יד
במלך אחשורוש:
ג. ויאמר המלך
מה-נעשה יקר וגדולה
למרדכי על-זה
ויאמרו גברי המלך משרחיו
לא-נעשה עמו דבר:
ד. ויאמר המלך מי בחצר
והמן בא
לחצר בית-המלך התיצוה
לאמר למלך לתלות את-מרדכי
על-העץ אשר-הכין לו:
ה. ויאמרו גברי המלך אליו
הנה המן עמד בחצר
ויאמר המלך יבוא:
ו. ויבוא המן
ויאמר לו המלך
מה-לעשות באיש
אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו
ויאמר המן בלבו
למי יחפץ המלך לעשות יקר
יותר ממני:
ז. ויאמר המן אל-המלך
איש אשר המלך חפץ ביקרו:
ח. יביאו לבוש מלכות
אשר לבש-בו המלך
וסוס אשר רכב עליו המלך
ונאשר נתן כתר מלכות בראשו:
ט. ונתון הלבוש והסוס

³⁹ For himself—ultimately, Haman was hung from his own gallows. (Megillah, 16:a.)

⁴⁰ Some of the Sages derive, from this, that the Book of Esther was written by Divine inspiration. Otherwise, how could the author have known Haman’s thoughts? (Megillah, 7:a.)

to a distinguished minister, a nobleman.
Then let them garb the man
whose glory the king desires,
mount him on the horse in the city thoroughfare,⁴¹

and proclaim before him,
‘This is what is done with a man
whose glory the king desires!’”

10. The king said to Haman,
“Quickly, take the cloak and the horse
just as you said,
and do so to Mordechai the Yehudi,
who sits at the gateway to the king.
Do not omit anything you mentioned!”

11. Haman took the robe and the horse
and garbed Mordechai.⁴²
Then he led him on horseback
through the city thoroughfare,
and proclaimed before him,
“This is what is done with a man
whose glory the king desires.”
12. Mordechai then returned
to the gateway to the king,
while Haman was rushed home,
griefstricken, his head covered [in shame].⁴³

13. Haman related to his wife Zeresh,
and all his friends

על־יֶד־אִישׁ מְשָׁרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרָחִים
וְהַלְבָּשׁוּ אֹתוֹ־הָאִישׁ

אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקָרוֹ
וְהִרְכִּיבֵהוּ עַל־הַסּוּס בְּרִחוּב הָעִיר

וְקָרָאוּ לִפְנֵיו
בְּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לָאִישׁ

אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקָרוֹ:
י. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֶמֶן

מְהֵרָה קַח אֶת־הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הַסּוּס
כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ

וַעֲשֵׂה־כֵן לְמֹרְדֵכַי הַיְּהוּדִי
הַיּוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֶל־תִּפְּל דְּבָר מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:
יא. וַיִּקַּח הֶמֶן אֶת־הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הַסּוּס

וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת־מֹרְדֵכַי
וַיַּרְכִּיבֵהוּ

בְּרִחוּב הָעִיר
וַיִּקְרָא לִפְנֵיו

בְּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לָאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקָרוֹ:

יב. וַיָּשֶׁב מֹרְדֵכַי
אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְהֶמֶן נִדְחָף אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ
אָבֵל וְחַפּוּי רֹאשׁ:

יג. וַיְסַפֵּר הֶמֶן לְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ
וּלְכָל־אֲהָבָיו

⁴¹ Haman dropped his suggestion concerning the crown when he saw that it aroused the king's deep resentment. (Rashi.)

⁴² Haman found Mordechai engrossed in study, and asked what the subject was. ‘The handful of flour,’ Mordechai replied, ‘which the Jews placed on the Temple altar for forgiveness.’ ‘Your handful of flour,’ said Haman, ‘has prevailed over my ten-thousand silver kikars’ (Megillah, 16:a.)

⁴³ When Haman paraded past his own home, his daughter noticed the commotion from their rooftop. Presuming that her father was the honoree, and Mordechai the crier, she emptied a cistern of filthy waste material on Haman's head. She realized her mistake, and plunged to the ground to her death. Thus, Haman was griefstricken over his daughter's death, and his head was bespattered with filth. (Megillah, 16:a.)

all that had befallen him.
His counsellors and his wife Zeresh told him,
“As Mordechai is of Yehudite stock,
since you have begun to fall before him,
you cannot overcome him,
but will surely fall before him.”⁴⁴

14. While they were still conversing with him,
the king’s stewards arrived,
rushing to bring Haman
to the feast which Esther had prepared.

אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ
אִם מִזֶּרַע הַיְּהוּדִים מָרְדֳּכָי
אֲשֶׁר הִחֲלוֹת לִנְפֹל לִפְנֵי
לֹא־תוּכַל לוֹ
כִּי־נִפּוֹל תִּפּוֹל לִפְנָיו:
יֵד. עוֹדָם מְדַבְּרִים עִמּוֹ
וְסֹרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הִגִּיעוּ
וַיִּבְהִלּוּ לְהָבִיא אֶת־הָמָן
אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתָּה אֲשֶׁר־עֲשָׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר:

Chapter 7 פרק ז

1. The king and Haman came
to drink with Queen Esther.
2. The king said to Esther,
at the second day’s winefest as well,
“Whatever your request, Queen Esther,
shall be granted you!
Whatever you wish,
even until half the empire, it shall be fulfilled!”
3. Queen Esther replied, saying,
“If I have gained your majesty’s favor
and if his majesty deems it proper,
let my life be granted me by my request,
and my people by my wish.
4. For we were sold, I and my people,
to be destroyed, slaughtered, and annihilated.
Now, had we been sold as slaves and maidservants,
I would have remained silent,

א. וַיָּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן
לִשְׁתּוֹת עִם־אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה:
ב. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר
גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי בַּמִּשְׁתָּה הַזֶּה
מִה־שְּׂאֵלָתְךָ אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
וְתִנָּחַן לָךְ
וּמִה־בִקְשָׁתְךָ
עַד־חֲצֵי הַמְּלָכוֹת וְתַעֲשֶׂה:
ג. וְתַעֲן אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר
אִם־מִצָּאִתִּי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב
תִּנָּחַן־לִי נַפְשִׁי בְּשֵׂאֵלָתִי
וְעַמִּי בְּבִקְשָׁתִּי:
ד. כִּי נִמְכַּרְנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי
לְהִשָּׁמִיד לְהָרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד
וְאֵלּוּ לַעֲבָדִים וּלְשִׁפְחוֹת נִמְכַּרְנוּ
הַחֲרָשְׁתִּי

⁴⁴ The Jews are compared to the stars and to dust. When they fall, they are as low as dust, but when they rise, they reach the stars. (Rashi.)

but the oppressor has no regard
for losses incurred by his majesty.

5. King Achashverosh spoke.

He said⁴⁵ to Queen Esther,

“Who is this?

Who is the one

that had the audacity to act this way?”

6. Esther exclaimed,

“An oppressive man, an enemy—

this evil Haman!”—

and Haman was terrified

before the king and the queen.

7. The king rose, in a fit of rage, from the winefest

toward the orchard garden,

while Haman got up

to plead with Queen Esther for his life,

for he realized

that it would end up badly for him

from the king.

8. When the king returned from the orchard garden

to the winefest room,

Haman had fallen⁴⁶ on the couch

upon which Esther reclined.

The king exclaimed,

“Even to overpower the queen

with me in the palace?”

The words left the king’s mouth,

and Haman’s face was enveloped in humiliation.

כִּי אֵין הָצָר שׁוֹנֶה

בְּנֹזֶק הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ה. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ

וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה

מִי הוּא זֶה

וְאִי־זֶה הוּא

אֲשֶׁר־מָלְאוּ לְבֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן:

ו. וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר

אִישׁ צָר וְאוֹיֵב

הַמֶּן הָרָע הַזֶּה

וְהָמָן נִכְלָעַת

מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמַּלְכָּה:

ז. וְהַמֶּלֶךְ גַּם בְּחִמְתּוֹ מִמִּשְׁתֵּתָה הָיִין

אֶל־גִּנַּת הַבֵּיתָן

וְהָמָן עָמַד

לִבְקֹשׁ עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה

כִּי רָאָה

כִּי־נִכְלָתָה אֵלָיו הָרָעָה

מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ח. וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁבַ מִגִּנַּת הַבֵּיתָן

אֶל־בֵּית | מִשְׁתֵּתָה הָיִין

וְהָמָן נָפַל עַל־הַמִּטָּה

אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ

הֲגַם לִכְבוֹשׁ אֶת־הַמַּלְכָּה

עִמִּי בְּבֵית

הַדָּבָר יֵצֵא מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וּפְנֵי הָמָן חִפּוּ:

⁴⁵ The repetition here teaches that the king altered his method of communication with the queen. Previously, he had spoken to her only through surrogates. Now, however, when he learned that she was a descendant of the royal house of Shaul, he addressed her directly. (Rashi.)

⁴⁶ An angel forced him onto the couch, so that the king would be further enraged. (Megillah, 16:a.)

9. Then Charvonah declared,⁴⁷ וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְבוֹנָה
[he was] one of the king's personal stewards, אֶחָד מִן־הַסֵּרִיסִים לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
"Moreover, there is the gallows גַּם הַגֹּהֶז־הָעֵץ
which Haman built for Mordechai, אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָמָן לְמֹרְדֵכָי
who spoke up in favor of the king, אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־טוֹב עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ
standing in Haman's house— עֹמֵד בְּבֵית הָמָן
fifty *amōhs* high." גִּבּוֹהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה
The king commanded, "Hang him from it." וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּלְוֵהוּ עָלָיו:
10. They hung Haman from the gallows י. וַיִּתְּלוּ אֹת־הָמָן עַל־הָעֵץ
which he had prepared for Mordechai, אֲשֶׁר־הֵכִין לְמֹרְדֵכָי
and the king's anger dissipated. וַחֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ שִׁכְכָה:

Chapter 8 פֶּרֶק ח

1. That day, א. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
King Achashverosh awarded Queen Esther נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרוֹשׁ לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה
the estate of Haman, the oppressor of the Yehudim.⁴⁸ אֶת־בֵּית הָמָן צָרָר הַיְּהוּדִים
And Mordechai appeared before the king, וּמֹרְדֵכָי בָּא לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
for Esther had told him how he was related to her. כִּי־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר מָה הוּא־לָהּ:
2. The king removed his ring, ב. וַיִּסֶּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ
which he had confiscated from Haman, אֲשֶׁר הָעֵבִיר מִהָמָן
and presented it to Mordechai. וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְמֹרְדֵכָי
And Esther authorized Mordechai וַתִּשֶׂם אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־מֹרְדֵכָי
to take custody of Haman's estate. עַל־בֵּית הָמָן:
3. Esther spoke again before the king. ג. וַתּוֹסֶף אֶסְתֵּר וַתְּדַבֵּר לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
She threw herself at his feet and wept, וַתִּפֹּל לְפָנֵי רַגְלָיו וַתִּבְךְ
and pleaded with him וַתַּחֲתַן־לּוֹ
to divert the evil decree of Haman the Agagite; לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת־דֵּעַת הָמָן הָאֲגָגִי
and his scheme וְאֵת מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ

⁴⁷ This was not actually Charvonah, who was an ally of Haman. Rather, it was the prophet Eliyahu, who appeared as Charvonah to goad the king into hanging Haman. (Midrash, 10:9.)

⁴⁸ Haman's property was diverted from his heirs, so that his memory would be totally obliterated. (Cf. Shemos, 17:14, Devarim, 25:19.) Indeed, Midrash remarks that Haman's vast wealth was divided into three parts. One third was given to Esther and Mordechai, one third was used for the reconstruction of the Temple, and one third was appropriated to indigent Torah scholars. (Or Chadash.)

which he had devised against the Yehudim.

4. The king extended

the golden sceptre towards Esther.

Esther rose, and stood before the king.

5. She said, "If his majesty deems it proper,

and if I have gained favor before him,

and the matter seems fitting before his majesty,

and I am pleasing in his eyes;

then let a writ be issued rescinding the documents

conceived by

Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite,

that he wrote

ordering the annihilation of the Yehudim

who reside in all the providence of the king.

6. For how can I possibly look on

while catastrophe befalls my people?

And how can I possibly look on

while my heritage⁴⁹ is annihilated?

7. King Achashverosh said

to Queen Esther and to Mordechai the Yehudi,

"Here, I have given Haman's estate to Esther,

and he was hung from the gallows

for attacking the Yehudim.

8. Thus, you may issue a writ

concerning the Yehudim

as you please,

in the name of the king

and you may seal it with the king's ring;

for a writ issued in the name of the king

and sealed with the king's ring,

is not rescindable.

אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים:

ד. וַיִּשְׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ

לְאַסְתֵּר אֶת שֶׁרֶבֶט הַזָּהָב

וַתִּקָּם אֶסְתֵּר וַתַּעֲמֹד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ה. וַתֹּאמֶר אֶם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב

וְאִם־מִצָּאתִי חֵן לִפְנֵי

וְכֹשֶׁר הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְּעֵינָיו

יִכָּחֵב לְהַשִּׁיב אֶת־הַסְּפָרִים

מִחֲשָׁבַת

הַמֶּן בֶּן־הַמְּדַחְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי

אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב

לְאַבֵּד אֶת־הַיְּהוּדִים

אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ:

ו. כִּי אֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאֲיָתִי

בְּרָעָה אֲשֶׁר־יִמְצָא אֶת־עַמִּי

וְאֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאֲיָתִי

בְּאַבְדֵּן מוֹלַדְתִּי:

ז. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ

לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וּלְמֹרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי

הַזֶּה בֵּית־הַמֶּן נָתַתִּי לְאַסְתֵּר

וְאֹתוֹ תָּלוּ עַל־הָעֵץ

עַל אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בַּיְּהוּדִים:

ח. וַתֹּאמֶר אֲנִי כְּתוּבוֹ

עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים

כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם

בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְחֹתְמוֹ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

כִּי־כָתַב אֲשֶׁר־נִכְתַּב בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ

וְנִחְתָּמוֹ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ

אֵין לְהַשִּׁיב:

⁴⁹ As the scion of the royal house of Shaul. If the nation is destroyed, its royalty is meaningless. (Yosef Lekach.)

9. The royal scribes were summoned at that time,⁵⁰
 during the third month,
 which is the month of Sivan,
 on the twenty third of the month,
 and transcripts were made
 of all of Mordechai's directives,
 to the Yehudim, to the envoys,
 to the governors, and to the ministers of the colonies
 which extended from Hodu until Kush,
 one hundred and twenty-seven colonies;
 each and every colony in its own script,
 each and every people in its own language.

Also, to the Yehudim,
 in their script and their language.

10. He wrote in the name of King Achashverosh,
 sealed it with the king's ring,
 and dispatched scrolls
 carried by couriers on horseback,
 riders of the royal breed,
 fleet dromedaries bred from *ramachim*.

11. Namely that the king authorized the Yehudim
 in each and every city
 to assemble and stand in defense of their lives;⁵¹
 to destroy, slaughter, and annihilate
 the military forces
 of any people or colony oppressing them,
 their children and women;

ט. וַיִּקְרְאוּ סֹפְרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעֵת-הַהִיא
 בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי
 הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ סִינן
 בַּשְּׁלוֹשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים בּו
 וַיַּכְתֹּב
 כָּל-אַשְׁרֵי-צִוָּה מֶרְדֳּכָי
 אֶל-יְהוּדִים וְאֶל הָאֲחַשְׁוֶרְפָּנִים
 וְהַפְּחוֹת וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת
 אֲשֶׁר | מִהוּדוּ וְעַד-כּוּשׁ
 שְׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה
 מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה כַּכְתָּבָהּ
 וְעַם וְעַם כָּל-שָׁנָו
 וְאֶל-יְהוּדִים
 כַּכְתָּבָם וּכְלָשׁוֹנָם:
 י. וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ
 וַיְחַתֵּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
 וַיִּשְׁלַח סִפְרִים
 בְּיַד הָרָצִים בְּסוּסִים
 רַכְבֵּי הָרֶכֶשׁ הָאֲחַשְׁתָּרְנִים
 בְּנֵי הָרָמָכִים:
 יא. אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיהוּדִים |
 אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-עִיר-וָעִיר
 לְהִקָּהֵל וְלַעֲמֹד עַל-נַפְשָׁם
 לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֹּד
 אֶת-כָּל-חַיִּל
 עַם וּמְדִינָה הַצָּרִים אֲתָם
 טַף וְנָשִׁים

⁵⁰ "At that time," because that particular time was significant. More than two months elapsed after Haman's hanging, before Esther and Mordechai released their edict. They waited because any earlier release would have been viewed as a farce, as it totally reversed the anti—Jewish decree which had just been issued under the full legal authority of the king. "At that time," when they felt that it would be effective, Esther and Mordechai issued the new edict. (Or Chadash.)

⁵¹ The annihilation of their oppressors was in defense of their lives—otherwise, the oppressors would have annihilated them. (Yosef Lekach.)

with their booty to be taken.

ושללם לבז:

12. On a single day,

יב. ביום אחד

in all the colonies of King Achashverosh—

בכל-מדינות המלך אחשורוש

on the thirteenth of the twelfth month,

בשלושה עשר לחודש שנים-עשר

which is the month of Adar.

הוא-חודש אדר:

13. The terms of the writ

יג. פתשגן הכתב

would become legally binding

להנחן דת

in each and every colony,

בכל-מדינה ומדינה

displayed conspicuously before all the peoples,

גלוי לכל-העמים

so that the Yehudim would be poised, on that day,

ולקיות היהודים עתידים ליום הזה

to exact vengeance on their enemies.

להנקם מאיביהם:

14. The couriers,

יד. הרצים

riders of the royal breed, the fleet dromedaries,

רכבי הרקש האחשוראים

rushed away by urgent royal command,

יצאו מבהלים ודחופים בדבר המלך

and the decree was delivered

והדת נתנה

in the capital city of Shushan.

בשושן הבירה:

15. Mordechai emerged from the king's presence

טו. ומרדכי יצא מלפני המלך

attired in majestic garb⁵²

בלבוש מלכות

of bluish *techeiles* wool and pure white,

תכלת וחור

with a great golden crown,

ועטרת זהב גדולה

and a cloak of linen and purple, *argaman* wool.

ותכריד בויץ וארגמן

And the city of Shushan was blissfully joyful.

והעיר שושן צהלה ושמחה:

16. For the Yehudim,

טז. ליהודים

there was radiance, joy, delight, and glory.

היתה אורה ושמחה וששן ויקר:

17. In each and every colony,

יז. ובכל-מדינה ומדינה

each and every city,

ובכל-עיר ועיר

every place

מקום

where with the king's directive and bylaw reached,

אשר דבר-המלך ודתו מגיע

there was joy and delight for the Jews,

שמחה וששון ליהודים

festivity and days of celebration,

משתה ויום טוב

⁵² Mordechai reigned as the monarch over the Jews of the kingdom. (Midrash, 10:12.)

with many among the people of the land
converting to Judaism,⁵³
as the awesomeness of the Yehudim had descended
over them.

וּרְבִים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ
מִתְהַיְהוּדִים
כִּי־נִפְלַל פְּחַד־הַיְּהוּדִים
עֲלֵיהֶם:

Chapter 9 פרק ט

1. During the twelfth month,
which is the month of Adar,
on the thirteenth day of the month,
when the king's directive and bylaw
were to be put in effect;
on the very day when the enemies of the Yehudim
anticipated that they would subdue them—
it was totally reversed,⁵⁴
for they—the Yehudim—subdued their enemies.
2. The Yehudim assembled in their colonies
throughtout all of King Achashverosh's colonies
to assault those who sought their harm,
and no man resisted them,
for their awesomeness had descended
over all the peoples.
3. All of the colonial ministers,
envoys, and governors,
and the imperial executive staff,
exalted the Yehudim,
as Mordechai's awesomeness had descended

א. וּבִשְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ
הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר
בְּשָׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ
אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעַ דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְדָחוּ
לְהַעֲשׂוֹת
בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר שָׁבְרוּ אֹיְבֵי הַיְּהוּדִים
לְשָׁלוֹט בָּהֶם
וְנִהְפָּךְ הָיָה
אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלְטוּ הַיְּהוּדִים הֵמָּה בְּשֹׁנְאֵיהֶם:
ב. וַתִּקְהָלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים בְּעָרֵיהֶם
בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ
לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמְבַקְשֵׁי רַעְתָּם
וְאִישׁ לֹא־עָמַד בְּפָנֵיהֶם
כִּי־נִפְלַל פְּחַדָּם
עַל־כָּל־הָעַמִּים:
ג. וְכָל־שָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת
וְהָאֲחַשְׁדָּרְפָּנִים וְהַפְּחוֹת
וְעֹשֵׂי הַמְּלָאכָה אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ
מִנְשָׂאִים אֹת־הַיְּהוּדִים
כִּי־נִפְלַל פְּחַד־מָרְדֳּכַי

⁵³ Haman, like all Amalekites was a descendant of Eisav. His downfall, followed by widespread conversion to Judaism, foreshadowed the universal redemption envisioned by the prophet, "The redeemers shall ascend Mount Zion to pass judgement against Eisav, and the kingdom shall belong to God. (Ovadia, v.21.)" (Or Chadash.)

⁵⁴ Indeed, all of Haman's nefarious activities were totally reversed—he was hung from the gallows which he had prepared for Mordechai, his castle and fortune were appropriated to the Jews, the imperial signet ring which Achashverosh had entrusted to him, as well as his very position as second to the king, were transferred to Mordechai. (Or Chadash. See Rashi to Bereishis, 25:23, "...will be mightier than the the other government.")

- over them. עליהם:
4. For Mordechai was powerful at the royal palace,
and his prestige extended throughout the colonies;
for the distinguished Mordechai's
greatness flourished. הולך וגדול:
ד. כִּי־גִדּוֹל מֶרְדֵּכַי בְּבֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ
וְשִׁמְעוֹ הוֹלֵךְ בְּכָל־הַמְּדִינֹת
כִּי־הָאִישׁ מֶרְדֵּכַי
הוֹלֵךְ וְגִדּוֹל:
5. The Yehudim struck all their enemies with
rapier blows,⁵⁵ slaughter, and annihilation,
doing as they pleased with their enemies. ה. וַיַּכּוּ הַיְּהוּדִים בְּכָל־אֹיְבֵיהֶם
מִכַּת־חֶרֶב וְהָרָג וְאֶבְדָּן
וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כְּשָׁנְאֵיהֶם כְּרָצוֹנָם:
6. In the capital city of Shushan,
the Yehudim killed and annihilated
five hundred men.⁵⁶ ו. וּבְשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה
הָרָגוּ הַיְּהוּדִים וְאַבְּדוּ
חֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ:
7. And Parshandasa,
and Dalfon,
and Aspasa. ז. וְאַתָּה | פֶּרְשַׁנְדָּסָא
וְאַתָּה | דַּלְפוֹן
וְאַתָּה | אֶסְפָּסָא:
8. And Porasa,
and Adalia,
and Aridasa. ח. וְאַתָּה | פּוֹרְסָא
וְאַתָּה | אַדְלִיָּא
וְאַתָּה | אַרִידָסָא:
9. And Parmashta,
and Arisai,
and Aridai,
and Vaizasa, ט. וְאַתָּה | פַּרְמַשְׁתָּא
וְאַתָּה | אַרִיסַי
וְאַתָּה | אַרִידַי
וְאַתָּה | וַיְזָסָא:
10. The ten⁵⁷ sons⁵⁸ of Haman, son of Hamdasa,
oppressor of the Yehudim, they killed.
But they did not lay their hands on the spoils.⁵⁹ י. עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי הָמָן בֶּן־הַמְּדָסָא
צוֹרֵר הַיְּהוּדִים הָרָגוּ
וּבְכָזָה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם:

⁵⁵ The "rapier blows" inflicted grievous injury, but not immediate death. The "slaughter" caused immediate death, but the bodies remained intact for burial. The "annihilation" totally obliterated the enemies, so that burial was impossible. (Or Chadash.)

⁵⁶ Amalekites. (Targum.)

⁵⁷ At the reading of the Megillah on Purim, the ten names are cantillated in one breath, to indicate that they all died at the same instant (Megillah, 16:b.) As they opposed the unity of God on earth, their deaths indicated that God's unity remained supreme. Thus, their deaths occurred in unison. (Or Chadash.)

⁵⁸ They were instrumental in maligning the Jews in the Holy land, so that they were denied permission to rebuild the Temple. (Rashi, from Seder Olam.)

⁵⁹ Esther's ancestor, King Shaul, had sinned by sparing the Amalekite King Agag, and by permitting the people to retain some of the Amalekite booty. (Shmuel I, ch.15.) His misdeed was now rectified through the killing of Agag's descendants, Haman and his children, and by the people's restraint in relinquishing the spoils.

11. On that day,
the total of those killed
in the capital city of Shushan
came to the king's attention.
12. The king said to Queen Esther,
"In the capital city of Shushan,
the Yehudim killed and annihilated
five hundren men,
and Haman's ten sons,
so in the remaining territories of the king,
[imagine] what they have done.
Now, whatever you request shall be granted you,
whatever else you wish shall be fulfilled."
13. Esther replied,
"If his majesty deems it proper,
then let tomorrow, too, be granted to the Yehudim
who are in Shushan,
to act in accordance with today's decree,
and let Haman's ten sons
be hung from a gallows."
14. The king gave word for this to be done.
The decree was proclaimed in Shushan,
and Haman's ten sons were hung.
15. The Yehudim who were in Shushan assembled
also on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,
and killed, in Shushan, three hundren men,⁶⁰
but they did not lay their hand on the spoils.
16. Now the remaining Yehudim
who were in the king's colonies
assembled and stood in defense of their lives,
bringing deliverance from their enemies
- יא. ביום ההוא
בא מספר ההרגים
בשושן הבירה
לפני המלך:
יב. ויאמר המלך לאסתר המלכה
בשושן הבירה
הרגו היהודים ואבד
חמש מאות איש
ואת עשרת בני-המן
בשאר מדינות המלך
מה עשו
ומה-שאלתך וינתן לך
ומה-בקשתך עוד ותעש:
יג. ותאמר אסתר
אם-על-המלך טוב
ינתן גם-מחר ליהודים
אשר בשושן
לעשות כדת היום
ואת עשרת בני-המן
יתלו על-העץ:
יד. ויאמר המלך להעשות כן
ותנתן דת בשושן
ואת עשרת בני-המן תלי:
טו. ויקהליו היהודים אשר-בשושן
אם ביום ארבעה עשר לחודש אדר
ויהרגו בשושן שלש מאות איש
ובבזא לא שלחו את-ידם:
טז. ושאר היהודים
אשר במדינות המלך
נקהליו וצמד על-נפשם
ונתו מאיביהם

⁶⁰ Amalekites. (Targum.)

killing seventy-five thousand of their antagonists.⁶¹

But they did not lay their hands on the spoils.

17. [The victory was]

on the thirteenth day of the month of Adar,

while the deliverance was realized

on the fourteenth of the month,

making it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

18. Whereas the Yehudim who were in Shushan

assembled on the thirteenth

and on the fourteenth of the month,

and realized deliverance

on the fifteenth of the month,

making it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

19. For this reason, "unwalled" Yehudim—

those who reside in unwalled cities—

observe the fourteenth day

of the month of Adar

[as a day of] feasting, rejoicing,

and a day of celebration,

sending gifts of food to one another.⁶²

20. Mordechai wrote of these matters,⁶³

and dispatched scrolls to all the Yehudim

in all of King Achashverosh's colonies,

those nearby and those distant.

21. Mandating that they resolve

to permanently observe

the fourteenth day of the month of Adar,

and the fifteenth day of the month,

וְהָרוּג בְּשֵׁנֵאֵיהֶם חֲמֵשֶׁה וּשְׁבַעִים אֶלֶף
וּבְבִזָּה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם:

יז. בְּיוֹם־שְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר

וְנִזְחַח

בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

וַעֲשָׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמִיחָה:

יח. וְהַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר־בְּשׁוּשָׁן

נִקְהָלוּ בְּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

וּבְאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

וְנִזְחַח

בַּחֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

וַעֲשָׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמִיחָה:

יט. עַל־כֵּן הֵיהְיוּדִים הַפְּזוּזִים

הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרוּזוֹת

עֹשִׂים אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר

לַחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר

שְׂמִיחָה וּמְשֻׁתָּה

וְיוֹם טוֹב

וּמְשָׁלוֹחַ מְנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ:

כ. וַיִּכְתֹּב מֶרְדֳּכָי אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה

וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים

אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ

הַקְּרוֹבִים וְהַרְחוֹקִים:

כא. לִקְרֹא עֲלֵיהֶם

לַהֲיֹת עֹשִׂים

אֶת יוֹם אַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר

וְאֶת יוֹם־חֲמֵשֶׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ

⁶¹ Amalekites. (Targum.)

⁶² The walled city dwellers, however, observe the fifteenth of the month, commemorating the day of deliverance of the walled city of Shushan. (Rashi, See Megillah, 2:a.)

⁶³ He wrote the Book of Esther. (Rashi.)

- each and every year. כב. כָּכָל־שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה:
22. Corresponding with the days מִיָּמִים
when the Yehudim realized deliverance אֲשֶׁר־נָחֲזוּ בָהֶם הַיְּהוּדִים
from their antagonists, מֵאֹיְבֵיהֶם
and the month וְהַחֹדֶשׁ
which had been transformed for them, אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ לָהֶם
from one of anguish to rejoicing, מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה
from grief to days of celebration; וּמֵאֵקֶל לַיּוֹם טוֹב
to observe them as days of feasting and rejoicing, לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מְשֻׁתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה
sending gifts of food to one another, וּמִשְׁלָח מִנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ
and gifts to the poor. וּמִתְּנוּת לְאֶבְיָנִים:
23. The Yehudim accepted, as binding, כג. וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים
the observances that they had begun, אֶת אֲשֶׁר־הִתְחִילוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת
and those that Mordechai had mandated in his letter וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר־כָּתַב מָרְדֳּכָי
to them. אֲלֵיהֶם:
24. For Haman, the son of Hamdasa, the Agagite, כד. כִּי הָמָן בֶּן־הַמְּדֵסָא הָאֲגָגִי
oppressor of all the Yehudim, צוּרֵר כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים
thought that he would annihilate the Yehudim. חָשַׁב עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים לְאַבְדָּם
He cast a *pur*, meaning "lot," וְהִפֵּל פּוּר הוּא הַגּוֹלָל
to terrorize, then annihilate them. לְהִמָּס וּלְאַבְדָּם:
25. But when she came before the king, כה. וּבָבֵאָה לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
he directed, in writing, אָמַר עַם־הַסֵּפֶר
that the evil scheme which he intended יָשׁוּב מִחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ הָרָעָה
for the Yehudim rebound against his own head, אֲשֶׁר־חָשַׁב עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ
and they hung him and his sons from a gallows. וְתָלוּ אוֹתוֹ וְאֶת־בָּנָיו עַל־הָעֵץ:
26. For this reason, כו. עַל־כֵּן
these days are entitled *purim*, קָרְאוּ לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה פּוּרִים
because of the lottery. עַל־שֵׁם הַפּוּר
[They are celebrated] for this reason— עַל־כֵּן
because of all that is narrated in this letter. עַל־כָּל־דְּבָרֵי הָאֲגָרָת הַזֹּאת
[This letter records] וּמַה־רָּאוּ עַל־כָּכָה
why they saw fit to act in such a way, וּמַה הִגִּיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם:
and what happened to them as a result.

27. The Yehudim resolved—accepting⁶⁴ as binding—
 for themselves, their progeny,
 and anyone associated with them,
 never to be changed,
 that they would observe these two days,
 as written, and at the proper time each year.

28. These days shall be recalled
 and observed in every generation,
 by every family,
 in every colony and every city;
 and these Purim days
 shall never pass from among the Yehudim,
 nor their memory depart from their descendants.

29. Queen Esther, daughter of Avichail, wrote
 together with Mordechai the Yehudi,
 with all the power [of their position]
 confirming this Purim letter
 a second time.⁶⁵

30. Scrolls were dispatched to all the Yehudim,
 to the one hundred and twenty-seven colonies
 of Achashveros's kingdom;
 words of peace and truth.

31. To maintain these Purim days
 at the proper time,
 as was resolved and confirmed
 by Mordechai the Yehudi and Queen Esther,
 and as they had resolved for themselves
 and their descendants;
 [commemorating] the incidents of the fasts

כו. קִיְּמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים |
 עֲלֵיהֶם | וְעַל-זֶרְעָם
 וְעַל כָּל-הַנּוֹלָדִים עֲלֵיהֶם
 וְלֹא יִעָבֹר
 לְהִיזוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת-שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה
 כְּכַתְּבָם וְכַזְמָנָם בְּכָל-שָׁנָה וּשְׁנָה:
 כח. וְהַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה נִזְכָּרִים
 וְנִעֲשִׂים בְּכָל-דּוֹר וָדוֹר
 מִשְׁפָּחָה וּמִשְׁפָּחָה
 מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וְעִיר וְעִיר
 וַיִּמְי הַפּוּרִים הָאֵלֶּה
 לֹא יִעָבְרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְּהוּדִים
 וְזִכְרָם לֹא-יִסּוּף מִזֶּרְעָם:

כט. וְיִתְּכָתֵב אֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה בַת-אֲבִיחַיִל
 וּמֹרְדֵכַי הַיְּהוּדִי
 אֶת-כָּל-חֲקָהָ
 לְקָיִם אֶת-אַגֶּרֶת הַפּוּרִים הַזֹּאת
 הַשְּׁנִית:

ל. וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל-כָּל-הַיְּהוּדִים
 אֶל-שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה
 מִלְּכוּת אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ
 דְּבָרֵי שְׁלוֹם וְאַמֶּת:

לא. לְקָיִם אֶת-יְמֵי הַפּוּרִים הָאֵלֶּה
 בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם
 בְּאִשּׁוּר קָיִם עֲלֵיהֶם
 מִרְדֵּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי וְאַסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה
 וּבְאִשּׁוּר קִיְּמוּ עַל-נִפְשָׁם
 וְעַל-זֶרְעָם
 דְּבָרֵי הַצּוֹמּוֹת

⁶⁴ The Rabbis remark that this infers, homiletically, that they now willingly resolved to observe the Torah which they were compelled to accept at Sinai. At Sinai, the mountain hovered over them, threatening to engulf them unless they accepted the Torah (Rashi to Shemos, 19:17.) Now, however, their willing acceptance of the additional Purim mitzvos indicated that they whole-heartedly accepted all of the Torah. (Shabbos, 88:a.)

⁶⁵ The following year, they again sent the letter mandating the observance of Purim. (Rashi.)

and their cries.
 32. On the basis of Esther's request,
 these Purim matters were perpetuated,
 and inscribed in a scroll.⁶⁶

וְזַעֲקָתָם:
 לַבּ. וּמֵאֵמֶר אֶסְתֵּר
 קָיָם דְּבָרֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה
 וְנִכְתָּב בַּסֵּפֶר:

Chapter 10 פרק י

1. King Achashverosh levied a tax
 on the land dwellers and the ocean islanders.
 2. All of his mighty, powerful deeds,
 and the record of Mordechai's eminence
 as granted him by the king;
 all of these are inscribed
 in the book of archives
 of the royalty of Media and Persia.
 3. For Mordechai the Yehudi
 was second to King Achasverosh,
 great among the Yehudim,
 esteemed by most of his brethren;
 he sought the welfare of his people,
 and was the spokesman for the peace⁶⁷
 of his descendants.

א. וַיִּשָּׂם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ | מִסַּ
 עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאֵי הַיָּם:
 ב. וְכָל-מַעֲשֵׂה תְקוּפּוֹ וְגִבּוֹרָתוֹ
 וּפְרָשׁוֹ גְּדֻלַּת מָרְדֳּכָי
 אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ
 הַלּוֹא-הֵם כְּתוּבִים
 עַל-סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים
 לְמַלְכֵי מֶדֶי וּפָרְס:
 ג. כִּי | מָרְדֳּכָי הַיְּהוּדִי
 מִשְׁנֶה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ
 וְגָדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים
 וְרָצוּי לְרַב אֲחִיו
 דָּרָשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ
 וְדַבָּר שְׁלוֹם
 לְכָל-זֶרְעוֹ:

She requested that the Book of Esther be cononized as part of the Sacred Scriptures, and the Rabbis agreed.
 , from Megillah, 7:a)
 Great Torah sages bring the world tranquility. (Midrash.)

Dedicated in memory of

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by
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